# RV BUSINESS

NOVEMBER 1984 $2.00

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**America's Sage On Quality In Production**

**Louisville Show Preview: Events, Floorplans, Listings**

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I'm interested in Jayco ☐ Fold-downs ☐ Travel Trailers ☐ Mini Motorhomes ☐ Fifth Wheels ☐ Truck Campers

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P.O. Box 460
Middlebury, IN 46540

RVB1184



# RV BUSINESS

A TL ENTERPRISES PUBLICATION NOVEMBER 1984 VOL. 35 NO. 8


## FEATURES


| | | |
|---|---|---|
| **DEMING ON QUALITY** *Bob Longsdorf* | 44 | In search of |
| **DETROIT FOR '85** *Ellis Traiton* | 64 | What's new from the Motor City |
| **PRODUCT ILLITERACY** *Gaylord Maxwell* | 86 | Salesmen, know your RVs! |
| **WHAT'S IN A NAME?** *Susan O'Hara* | 94 | The marketing touch that lasts forever |
| **ESTIMATING OR GUESTIMATING** *Robert Empringa* | 104 | Saving time, money on service bids |
| **SUE THE BASTARDS** *Frederic F. Brace Jr.* | 116 | A litigation checklist |
| **RV RANGES AND OVENS** *Karl A. Kopetzki* | 122 | The ABCs of servicing appliances |
| **TEEN WORKERS** *Bess Ritter May* | 134 | Major results from minors |
| **THE COMMISSION INCOME** *Gary Drummond* | 145 | High on the hog vs. out on a limb |
| **SALES BOOKS REVIEW** *Dave Bessner* | 153 | The well-read salesperson |
| **22nd ANNUAL NATIONAL RV TRADE SHOW** | 171 | Events, floorplans, listings |


## DEPARTMENTS


| | | | |
|---|---|---|---|
| **EDITORIAL** *Michael Schneider* | 5 | **RV PEOPLE** | 30 |
| **LETTERS** | 8 | **OERTLE** *V. Lee Oertle* | 34 |
| **MAXWELL** *Gaylord Maxwell* | 12 | **RVDA** *Fran Van Pelt* | 40 |
| **LEWALLEN** *Stan Lewallen* | 18 | **AD OF THE MONTH** *Ben Sussman* | 157 |
| **BAROMETER** *John Thompson* | 23 | **INDUSTRY NEWS** *Olga Markowitz* | 161 |
| **PERSPECTIVE** *Gaylord Maxwell* | 24 | **PRODUCT SPOTLIGHT** | 180 |
| **ASSOCIATIONS** *Olga Markowitz* | 25 | **PROFITMAKERS** | 184 |
| **SHIPMENTS** | 26 | **CALENDAR** | 212 |
| | | **RETALES** *Bob Stevens* | 214 |


**ON THE COVER:** The word "quality" and the name "W. Edward Deming" are practically synonymous in Japanese industry. With his philosophy finally being accepted by U.S. industry, Dr. Deming still preaches his message with evangelic fervor. Deming's views on quality begin on page 44. Photo: Bob Longsdorf. Type art: Future Fonts Inc.

# Perspective

An analysis of RVB's monthly survey of its Dealer Advisory Board Members

GAYLORD MAXWELL

| | NEW | | | | | | USED | | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | FOR MONTH | | | YEAR-TO-DATE | | | FOR MONTH | | | YEAR-TO-DATE | | |
| | AUG '84 | AUG '83 | % CHANGE | 1984 | 1983 | % CHANGE | AUG '84 | AUG '83 | % CHANGE | 1984 | 1983 | % CHANGE |
| MOTORHOMES | 116 | 114 | + 2% | 874 | 842 | + 4% | 80 | 94 | –15% | 645 | 532 | +21% |
| TRAVEL TRAILERS | 77 | 113 | –32% | 755 | 845 | –11% | 92 | 83 | +11% | 661 | 686 | – 4% |
| TRUCK CAMPERS | 13 | 25 | –48% | 150 | 125 | +20% | 14 | 20 | –30% | 163 | 161 | + 1% |
| CAMPING TRAILERS | 145 | 169 | –14% | 1,449 | 1,268 | +14% | 43 | 30 | +43% | 262 | 254 | + 3% |
| FIFTH-WHEELS | 29 | 24 | +21% | 288 | 226 | +27% | 11 | 17 | –35% | 80 | 63 | +27% |

| | FOR MONTH | | | YEAR-TO-DATE | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | AUG '84 | AUG '83 | % CHANGE | 1984 | 1983 | % CHANGE |
| SALES VOLUME | $8,957,740 | $8,541,848 | + 5% | $68,625,376 | $61,513,429 | +12% |
| TOTAL UNIT SALES | 620 | 659 | – 6% | 5,327 | 5,002 | + 6% |
| NEW UNIT SALES | 380 | 445 | –15% | 3,516 | 3,306 | + 6% |
| USED UNIT SALES | 240 | 214 | +12% | 1,811 | 1,696 | + 7% |

August was not a great month for the average dealer. Sales volume was up slightly over last August, but the upswing that was so prominent a year ago has definitely turned into a zigzag line.

Although these figures do not portray as rosy a picture as those of several months ago, disaster does not appear to be imminent. The period of leveling off that began about three months ago is continuing and will likely do so in the near future. Sales are good, but the boom is over for the time being.

Due to end-of-summer closeouts, profit ratings dropped significantly. Several members of the DAB reported that they were clearing out their lots. Used units fell dramatically from nearly 100 percent excellent ratings a year ago to only four this month. Many reasons for the leveling off are given. Quite likely, it is a combination of factors: The pent-up demand has been satisfied, more dealers are in the business, it was a hot summer and people are waiting to see what happens in November. Even with the tapering off, several dealers set new records in August. It is never an all or nothing game. The point is that, regardless of what others are doing, there's always the chance that some individuals will be outstanding.

## MOTORHOMES

The very slight increase in new unit sales for the month seems strange after the long period of sharp upswing. Motorhome sales aren't down; the pie is being served to more eaters. Some dealers are complaining about poor grosses because of increased competition. A few are predicting widespread discounting as car dealers blow out inventory they are having trouble with.

For the first time in two years, some dealers are experiencing problems in moving used units. One DAB member reports Class A's impossible to move in his area. Others report reduced profits. There doesn't appear to be any big change ahead in the motorhome sales picture. Sales should be quite good overall.

## TRAVEL TRAILERS

This is the only category to show a decrease in sales both for the month and year-to-date. Trailer dealers can't account for the fact that they are having a difficult time. Although a few are exceeding last year's sales, most are behind—some way behind.

Profits are down, too. More than 40 percent of the trailer dealers on the DAB reported new unit profits fair or poor. Used unit sales are holding up better but they are still down slightly for the year-to-date.

Travel trailer sales haven't gone to pot, but if the present trend continues, some dealers will have to downsize their businesses or look to other areas for additional business.

## TRUCK CAMPERS

Sales tumbled for the month, but year-to-date, the figures still reflect a very positive picture. Both new and used unit sales fell in August; profits dropped, too. Campers are a specialty business. Not many dealers are willing to put the money and effort into them to do the job right.

## CAMPING TRAILERS

After a generally good year, sales of new units dropped in August. Overall, the DAB's year-to-date figures indicate that folding camping trailers are enjoying a modest comeback.

A few large folding trailer specialists have had a banner year, but some who don't specialize but have strong departments in that type dropped significantly. Profits were rated fair to good.

## FIFTH-WHEELS

In new unit sales, this is definitely the most positive category. The unit numbers aren't large, but the percentages are. Specialists are doing exceptionally well, most dealers who stock fivers seem to be doing a reasonably good job.

This category got more excellent profit ratings than any other category. Those that are sold bring good grosses.

With an increasing number of mobile-minded retirees, there's no reason to believe sales will go anywhere but up. Δ

*Perspective is a compilation of data provided by RVB's Dealer Advisory Board (DAB), a group comprised of 22 dealers representing a cross-section of the U.S. dealer body. This report is an attempt to reflect the current retail sales picture; it does not purport to indicate RV production or factory sales to dealers.*

# RVIA, AUGUST

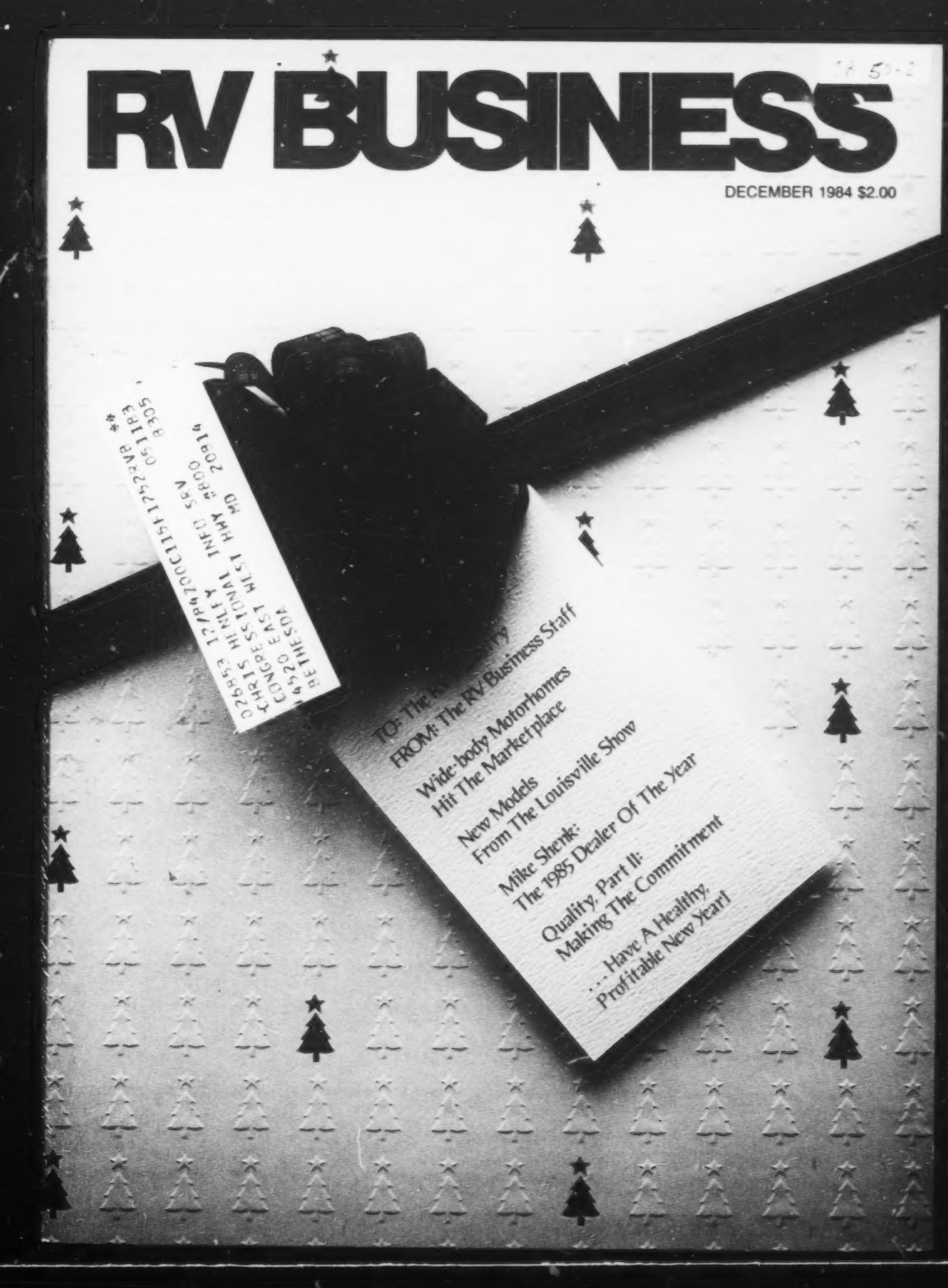
The marketing committee of the Recreation Vehicle Industry Association has announced that the total number of recreational vehicles shipped from manufacturers' plants during August 1984 was 32,600 units, up 7.6% from August of 1983.

The shipment figures released by the association are contained in a report compiled for the membership by RVIA's marketing committee under the chairmanship of Allen Yoder Jr. of Jayco, Incorporated, Middlebury, Indiana.

| RV shipments were as follows in August 1984 | | August 1983 | Percent Change | Cumulative 1984 | Cumulative 1983 | Percent Change |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| TRAVEL TRAILERS | 5,200 | 5,500 | – 5.5% | 56,200 | 52,200 | + 7.7% |
| FIFTH-WHEELS | 1,400 | 1,500 | – 6.7% | 14,000 | 12,100 | +15.7% |
| TRUCK CAMPERS | 600 | 800 | –25.0% | 6,100 | 5,300 | +15.1% |
| MULTI-USE VEHICLES | 14,900 | 12,900 | +15.5% | 122,500 | 105,800 | +15.8% |
| TYPE A: MOTOR-HOMES | 4,100 | 3,100 | +32.3% | 29,600 | 21,700 | +36.4% |
| TYPE B: VAN CAMPERS | 300 | 200 | +50.0% | 5,200 | 3,400 | +52.9% |
| TYPE C: MINI MOTOR-HOMES | 2,500 | 3,200 | –21.9% | 25,200 | 21,200 | +18.9% |
| FOLDING CAMPING TRAILERS | 3,600 | 3,100 | +16.1% | 29,400 | 27,100 | + 8.5% |
| TOTALS | 32,600 | 30,600 | + 7.6% | 288,200 | 248,800 | +15.8% |

# RV BUSINESS

DECEMBER 1984 $2.00


TO: The RV Industry
FROM: The RV Business Staff
Wide-body Motorhomes Hit The Marketplace
New Models From The Louisville Show
Mike Shenk: The 1985 Dealer Of The Year
Quality, Part II: Making The Commitment
... Have A Healthy, Profitable New Year!

A TL ENTERPRISES PUBLICATION DECEMBER 1984 VOL. 35 NO. 9

## FEATURES


| | | |
|---|---|---|
| **8½-FOOTERS** *Bob Lonzeskaf* | 38 | The wider-body motorhomes venture into the market |
| **FORD-CHEVY TALK** *Ellis Traviss* | 46 | Plans and projections as Detroit sweetens the '85 pot |
| **1985 DEALER OF THE YEAR** *Don Magers* | 54 | Mike Shenk, the star of Texas |
| **QUALITY II** *Bob Lonzeskaf* | 62 | Committing management to the crucial process |
| **NEW MODELS** *Olga Markovic* | 73 | Direct from Louisville |
| **THE HANDICAP MARKET** *Candace Stevenson* | 80 | This RV segment proves it's not so disabled |


## DEPARTMENTS


| | | | |
|---|---|---|---|
| **EDITORIAL** *Michael Schlender* | 5 | **SHIPMENTS** | 26 |
| **LETTERS** | 8 | **RV PEOPLE** | 28 |
| **MAXWELL** *Garland Maxwell* | 12 | **OERTLE** *A. Lee Oertle* | 30 |
| **LEWALLEN** *Stan Lewallen* | 16 | **AD OF THE MONTH** *Ben Stevenson* | 91 |
| **BAROMETER** *John Hampson* | 23 | **INDUSTRY NEWS** *Olga Markovic* | 95 |
| **PERSPECTIVE** *Garland Maxwell* | 24 | **CALENDAR** | 128 |
| **ASSOCIATIONS** *Olga Markovic* | 25 | **RETALES** *Bob Stevens* | 130 |


**ON THE COVER:** *RV Business* is one of those very special year-round gifts from us to you. Each month we search out the closest topics, the best photographs and illustrations and wrap them in an outstanding cover. Then it is all delivered to your doorstep. This month's cover usually extends our gift to you with Season's Greetings and our wishes for the best of New Years. Photo: Steve Braddus.

(Special Louisville issue shows the city's jewel-like nighttime skyline. Photo: Sheryl Davis.)

# Perspective

An analysis of RVB's monthly survey of its Dealer Advisory Board Members

GAYLORD MAXWELL

| | NEW | | | | | | USED | | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | FOR MONTH | | | YEAR-TO-DATE | | | FOR MONTH | | | YEAR-TO-DATE | | |
| | SEPT '84 | SEPT '83 | % CHANGE | 1984 | 1983 | % CHANGE | SEPT '84 | SEPT '83 | % CHANGE | 1984 | 1983 | % CHANGE |
| MOTORHOMES | 69 | 93 | –26% | 931 | 934 | – 1% | 62 | 73 | –15% | 710 | 679 | + 5% |
| TRAVEL TRAILERS | 69 | 83 | –17% | 825 | 928 | –11% | 62 | 96 | –35% | 733 | 794 | – 8% |
| TRUCK CAMPERS | 11 | 12 | – 8% | 161 | 146 | +10% | 16 | 14 | +14% | 180 | 162 | +11% |
| CAMPING TRAILERS | 94 | 102 | – 8% | 1,545 | 1,361 | +14% | 19 | 22 | --14% | 281 | 275 | + 2% |
| FIFTH-WHEELS | 24 | 28 | –14% | 311 | 252 | +23% | 6 | 11 | –45% | 102 | 90 | +13% |

| | FOR MONTH | | | YEAR-TO-DATE | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | SEPT '84 | SEPT '83 | % CHANGE | 1984 | 1983 | % CHANGE |
| SALES VOLUME | $5,696,022 | $6,919,350 | –18% | $74,302,392 | $68,338,540 | + 9% |
| TOTAL UNIT SALES | 432 | 534 | –19% | 5,779 | 5,561 | + 4% |
| NEW UNIT SALES | 267 | 318 | –16% | 3,773 | 3,621 | + 4% |
| USED UNIT SALES | 165 | 216 | –24% | 2,006 | 1,940 | + 3% |

September was definitely a slower month for many dealers. Dealer Advisory Board (DAB) figures show that more than half its members took in fewer dollars than they did in the previous September. They also sold fewer units, both new and used.

Profits also dropped. There were fewer excellent marks and more poor ones. Only used units appear to be holding well. With only one exception (used truck campers), all categories were down for the month. Motorhomes had the sharpest drop among new units, and fifth-wheels led the decline in used.

Year-to-date, the figures are not so bad. Three categories of new are still up, and four of the five used columns are still plus. These figures do not signify a collapse of the RV market. A slow-down for the average dealer had been in progress for several months. The down-turn is due partly to the fact that buyers are holding off, perhaps until after the election. The primary cause is that there are more dealers, and the pie slices are smaller. Indications are that there will be a period of adjustment in which some dealers will drop out—particularly car dealers who have not made serious commitments to the RV industry.

## MOTORHOMES

We would have to go back five years to see a new motorhome-sales dip similar to what we saw this month. It was not an across-the-board drop. Most large DAB motorhome specialists took a tumble, but department store-type dealers had mixed results.

Motorhome dealers have proved most vulnerable to dealer marketplace saturation. In some areas, regular dealers are already reporting close-out sales. That hurts the profit picture for everyone in the area. Motorhome profits have weakened; DAB ratings are lower than they have been since 1979- 80. The future of motorhome sales is not in jeopardy, but dealers need to adjust their modus operandi to current realities.

## TRAVEL TRAILERS

New-unit sales were down from last September—a monthly situation that has been going on since early summer. Used sales dropped even more drastically. Year-to-date, both categories are down from the previous year. Travel trailer dealers are concerned. Sales have dragged all year, and they still do not see a light at the end of the tunnel.

## TRUCK CAMPERS

Sales of new units were down slightly for the month; used units were up slightly. Year-to-date, both categories are up. Profits were very mixed. A couple of DAB dealers added campers this summer; a couple dropped them. Few have made a strong commitment to this RV type.

## CAMPING TRAILERS

Although new units were slightly off for the month, the overall picture for the year is quite good. A few dealers have had a great year, particularly those who specialize in the folding units.

It seems logical that light-weights will more than hold their own in this low-power automobile age. Dealers who aren't making an effort to get their share of that market are missing a bet.

## FIFTH-WHEELS

For the first time this year, fivers took a dive for the month. The drop is not serious, nor are the numbers large, but any drop is significant. Possibly older people—fifth-wheel buyers, generally—are more interested than younger people are in the outcome of the election. Year-to-date, the sales increase is still good—the best of all types in both new and used. Δ

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# RVIA, SEPTEMBER

The marketing committee of the Recreation Vehicle Industry Association has announced that the total number of recreational vehicles shipped from manufacturers' plants during September 1984 was 26,200 units, down 7.8% from September 1983.

The shipment figures released by the association are contained in a report compiled for the membership by RVIA's marketing committee under the chairmanship of Allen Yoder Jr. of Jayco, Incorporated, Middlebury, Indiana.

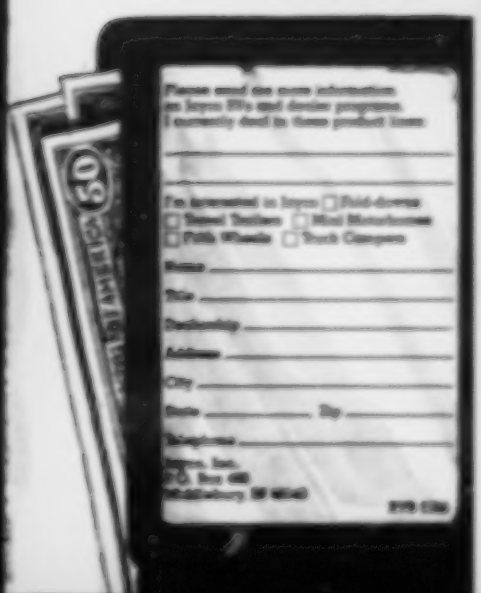
| RV shipments were as follows in September 1984 | | September 1983 | Percent Change | Cumulative 1984 | Cumulative 1983 | Percent Change |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| TRAVEL TRAILERS | 4,900 | 5,800 | – 15.5% | 61,100 | 58,000 | + 5.1% |
| FIFTH-WHEELS | 1,400 | 1,700 | –17.6% | 15,400 | 13,800 | + 11.6% |
| TRUCK CAMPERS | 500 | 600 | –16.7% | 6,600 | 5,900 | + 11.9% |
| MULTI-USE VEHICLES | 11,700 | 11,400 | + 2.6% | 134,200 | 117,200 | + 14.5% |
| TYPE A: MOTOR-HOMES | 2,500 | 3,000 | –16.7% | 32,100 | 24,700 | + 30.0% |
| TYPE B: VAN CAMPERS | 300 | 700 | –57.1% | 5,500 | 4,100 | + 34.1% |
| TYPE C: MINI MOTOR-HOMES | 2,000 | 2,400 | – 16.7% | 27,200 | 23,600 | + 15.3% |
| FOLDING CAMPING TRAILERS | 2,900 | 2,800 | + 3.8% | 32,300 | 29,900 | + 8.0% |
| TOTALS | 26,200 | 28,400 | – 7.8% | 314,400 | 277,200 | + 13.4% |

# RV BUSINESS

JANUARY 1985 $2.00

## New Products In '85: Up, Up And Away!

SOMETHIN
EVERYONE




A T L ENTERPRISES PUBLICATION JANUARY 1985 VOL. 35 NO. 1


| | | |
|---|---|---|
| NEW PRODUCTS FOR '85 | 34 | New products from new ideas, new applications and new products |
| QUALITY | 50 | The necessity of management commitment [illegible] |
| IS GOOD EXTRA-ORDINARY? | 54 | The recognition of "exceptional" and what it means to the industry |
| IT'S MEL BROWN | 59 | Where always out for industry — and us says |
| TAX REFORM ACT | 64 | A guide to the act's impact on the RV industry |
| HENRY 'ZIP-DEE' DUDA | 73 | A daughter's loving tribute to her entrepreneurial father |
| AD OF THE YEAR | 79 | Accolades to Jeffco Industries and to Burke and Evergreen Advertising |

| | | | |
|---|---|---|---|
| EDITORIAL | 5 | PERSPECTIVE | 30 |
| LETTERS | 8 | ASSOCIATIONS | 31 |
| MAXWELL | 10 | SHIPMENTS/WDA SALES | 32 |
| LEWALLEN | 14 | INDUSTRY NEWS | 83 |
| OERTLE | 18 | PROFITMAKERS | 104 |
| RV PEOPLE | 26 | CALENDAR | 108 |
| FISCALINE | 29 | RETALES | 111 |


ON THE COVER: New products are a necessity. The ones here focus on economy. Credit to the car but she's become reliable. Property utilized, she's can make greater dollars than an RV and provides that same feel some people still the created we gave 34. Paper sculpture: Ed Schroeder. Photo: Ed Ruth.

# Perspective

An analysis of RVB's monthly survey of its Dealer Advisory Board Members

GAYLORD MAXWELL

| | NEW | | | | | | USED | | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | FOR MONTH | | | YEAR-TO-DATE | | | FOR MONTH | | | YEAR-TO-DATE | | |
| | OCT '84 | OCT '83 | % CHANGE | 1984 | 1983 | % CHANGE | OCT '84 | OCT '83 | % CHANGE | 1984 | 1983 | % CHANGE |
| MOTORHOMES | 80 | 90 | –10% | 1,021 | 1,024 | – 1% | 70 | 67 | + 4% | 786 | 713 | +10% |
| TRAVEL TRAILERS | 68 | 65 | + 5% | 893 | 995 | –10% | 71 | 67 | + 6% | 801 | 855 | – 6% |
| TRUCK CAMPERS | 13 | 8 | +63% | 174 | 153 | +14% | 17 | 20 | – 15% | 197 | 183 | + 8% |
| CAMPING TRAILERS | 48 | 83 | –42% | 1,592 | 1,454 | + 9% | 15 | 11 | + 36% | 295 | 286 | + 3% |
| FIFTH-WHEELS | 19 | 23 | –17% | 337 | 275 | +23% | 13 | 5 | +160% | 95 | 94 | + 1% |

| | FOR MONTH | | | YEAR-TO-DATE | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | OCT '84 | OCT '83 | % CHANGE | 1984 | 1983 | % CHANGE |
| SALES VOLUME | $6,048,498 | $6,310,347 | – 4% | $80,349,200 | $76,640,912 | + 5% |
| TOTAL UNIT SALES | 414 | 439 | – 6% | 6,128 | 6,032 | + 2% |
| NEW UNIT SALES | 228 | 269 | –15% | 3,954 | 3,901 | + 1% |
| USED UNIT SALES | 186 | 170 | + 9% | 2,174 | 2,131 | + 2% |

According to RVB's Dealer Advisory Board (DAB), October 1984 was a disappointing month for some dealers. Sales for the group were down from the previous year in both dollar volume and new-unit sales. This month's report marks the first time since the upswing that followed the second gasoline crisis when the monthly sales volume has been lower than the corresponding month of the previous year.

Those facts, however, are somewhat misleading. Although the group figures were down, sales for most DAB members were up. Actually, only 7 of the 22 members of the board suffered drops from the previous year; 15 were up.

Year-to-date, the picture is not bad. In terms of unit sales, new units are slightly ahead of last year. Used units are still moving well and retain a slight edge above 1983 figures.

Profits weakened in October. There were very few excellents on the ratings chart; more members said their profits were only fair or poor.

## MOTORHOMES

As with dollar volume, a drop in unit motorhome sales was due to problems a few of the larger DAB dealers had. Our report shows that there was an 11 percent drop in new-unit sales. Although that is true, several DAB motorhome dealers were well ahead of last year. There is no collapse of the motorhome market; a period of readjustment for some dealers distorts our figures here.

Reports do show, however, that in some areas, motorhome sales are very weak. Local economic conditions account in part for some of the problems, and an overabundance of dealers has created some in others.

The market for used motorhomes is still good, but a few dealers are reporting excess inventory. Profits on both new and used were rated from fair to good.

## TRAVEL TRAILERS

For most DAB dealers, this RV type has been a sluggish seller all year. Sales were up by one unit over October '83, but year-to-date, they are running 10 percent behind. Nineteen of the DAB dealers stock trailers. Seven are ahead of 1983 unit sales figures (three by only one unit); 12 are down.

Although the overall picture reflects some problems, a few individual trailer dealers are finishing a banner year. In fact, the profit ratings for this category were the best for any group in the October report.

## TRUCK CAMPERS

This RV type shows the best percentage increase for the month in any category. However, that figure is based on very few unit sales, so it loses some of its significance. Campers are selling, possibly better than they have for several years. Most of the business is being done by the camper specialist.

Profits were rated good to excellent. Campers have the next-to-the-highest increase (fifth-wheels are first) in new-unit sales for the year-to-date.

## CAMPING TRAILERS

After a terrific start, the fold-downs took a bath in October. The 42 percent drop is largely attributable to unusually poor sales by two DAB camping trailer specialists. Most dealers remained at about the same level as the previous year. Profit ratings ranged from fair to good; one dealer marked them poor.

## FIFTH-WHEELS

The fiver specialists did reasonably well for the month, but many dealers who normally make only one or two sales a month dropped to zero. There is no particular reason for the drop, but it makes sales look bad.

Of the five RV types, fifth-wheels have the best percentage increase for the year-to-date in new units. Two specialists account for the majority of the sales. Profits for the month were rated good. Δ

*Perspective is a compilation of data provided by RVB's Dealer Advisory Board (DAB), a group comprised of 23 dealers representing a cross-section of the U.S. Dealer body. This report is an attempt to reflect the current retail sales picture; it does not purport to indicate RV production or factory sales to dealers.*

# WDA QUARTERLY SALES FIGURES

*RV Business* publishes a quarterly report of sales statistics from the Warehouse Distributors Association. The chart shown here is based upon a representative sampling of WDA members, as compiled in the third quarter of 1984. While these statistics are not intended to be fully indicative of the sales volume among distributors in the RV and MH industries, they are presented here as an insight into the supplier/distributor industry.

**SALES VOLUME**

| | THIRD-QUARTER SALES VOLUME | |
|---|---|---|
| | PERCENT CHANGE 1983 to 1984 | RANGE OF CHANGE |
| REGION 1 | +2.9% | +51.5% to −24.3% |
| REGION 2 | +19.3% | +44.5% to −13.9% |
| REGION 3 | + 4.7% | +40.3% to −15.2% |
| REGION 4 | −29.1% | +22.9% to −139.9% |
| REGION 5 | +15.4% | +36.6% to −22.9% |
| REGION 6 | + 3.2% | +41.4% to −19.0% |

**Region 1:** Connecticut, Delaware, Maine, Maryland, Massachusetts, New Hampshire, New Jersey, New York, Pennsylvania, Rhode Island, Vermont, Virginia, West Virginia and Washington, D.C.; **Region 2:** Alabama, Florida, Georgia, Mississippi, North and South Carolina, and Tennessee; **Region 3:** Illinois, Indiana, Iowa, Kentucky, Michigan, Minnesota, Missouri, Nebraska, North and South Dakota, Ohio and Wisconsin; **Region 4:** Arkansas, Colorado, Kansas, Louisiana, Oklahoma, New Mexico and Texas; **Region 5:** Alaska, Arizona, California, Hawaii, Idaho, Montana, Nevada, Oregon, Utah, Washington and Wyoming; **Region 6:** Canada.

# RVIA, OCTOBER

The marketing committee of the Recreation Vehicle Industry Association has announced that the total number of recreational vehicles shipped from manufacturers' plants during October 1984 was 29,700 units, down 1% from October 1983.

The shipment figures released by the association are contained in a report compiled for the membership by RVIA's marketing committee under the chairmanship of Allen Yoder Jr. of Jayco Incorporated, Middlebury, Indiana.

| RV shipments were as follows in Oct. 1984 | | Oct. 1984 | Percent Change | Cumulative 1984 | Cumulative 1983 | Percent Change |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| TRAVEL TRAILERS | 5,100 | 6,100 | −16.4% | 66,200 | 64,100 | + 3.3% |
| FIFTH-WHEELS | 1,900 | 1,700 | +11.8% | 17,300 | 15,500 | +11.6% |
| TRUCK CAMPERS | 500 | 400 | +25.0% | 7,100 | 6,300 | +12.7% |
| MULTI-USE VEHICLES | 13,300 | 12,700 | + 4.7% | 147,500 | 129,900 | +13.5% |
| TYPE A: MOTOR-HOMES | 3,200 | 3,200 | 0 | 35,300 | 27,900 | +26.5% |
| TYPE B: VAN CAMPERS | 400 | 500 | −20.0% | 5,900 | 4,600 | +28.3% |
| TYPE C: MINI MOTOR-HOMES | 2,100 | 2,700 | −22.2% | 29,300 | 26,300 | +11.4% |
| FOLDING CAMPING TRAILERS | 3,200 | 2,700 | +18.5% | 35,500 | 32,600 | + 8.9% |
| TOTALS | 29,700 | 30,000 | − 1.0% | 344,100 | 307,200 | +12.0% |

CE 950-2

# RV BUSINESS

FEBRUARY

## CLOCK IN TO QUALITY WITH THE HOURLY WORKER

026853 02/05/00C11SF1252RVB **
CHRIS MEMLEY 051183
CONGRESSIONAL INFO SRV 8305
4920 EAST WEST HWY #900
BETHESDA MD 20814

'85 Models

How To Balance Retail Inventory

| | | | |
|---|---|---|---|
| QUALITY | 42 | | |
| THE PERFECT BOSS—AND THE PERFECT WORKER | 48 | | |
| NEW MODELS FOR '85 | 58 | | |
| BALANCING INVENTORY | 71 | | |
| AD OF THE MONTH | 80 | | |
| EDITORIAL | 5 | SHIPMENTS | 30 |
| LETTERS | 8 | WHOLESALE | 32 |
| MAXWELL | 12 | RV PEOPLE | 38 |
| LEWALLEN | 17 | INDUSTRY NEWS | 83 |
| OERTEL | 20 | RVIA SHOW | 86 |
| ESCALINI | 27 | CALENDAR | 100 |
| PERSPECTIVE | 28 | RETAILS | 102 |
| ASSOCIATIONS | 29 | | |


ON THE COVER:

# Perspective

An analysis of RVB's monthly survey of its Dealer Advisory Board Members

GAYLORD MAXWELL

| | NEW | | | | | | USED | | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | FOR MONTH | | | YEAR-TO-DATE | | | FOR MONTH | | | YEAR-TO-DATE | | |
| | NOV '84 | NOV '83 | % CHANGE | 1984 | 1983 | % CHANGE | NOV '84 | NOV '83 | % CHANGE | 1984 | 1983 | % CHANGE |
| MOTORHOMES | 78 | 100 | –22% | 1,099 | 1,125 | – 2% | 62 | 71 | – 13% | 834 | 812 | + 3% |
| TRAVEL TRAILERS | 55 | 52 | + 6% | 948 | 1048 | –10% | 54 | 57 | – 5% | 848 | 895 | – 5% |
| TRUCK CAMPERS | 13 | 16 | –19% | 183 | 157 | +17% | 11 | 19 | – 42% | 208 | 200 | + 4% |
| CAMPING TRAILERS | 25 | 32 | –22% | 1,333 | 1,344 | – 1% | 11 | 3 | + 67% | 289 | 339 | –15% |
| FIFTH-WHEELS | 34 | 40 | – 5% | 354 | 294 | +20% | 7 | 7 | same | 113 | 98 | +15% |

| | FOR MONTH | | | YEAR-TO-DATE | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | NOV '84 | NOV '83 | % CHANGE | 1984 | 1983 | % CHANGE |
| SALES VOLUME | $6,046,020 | $6,785,389 | –11% | $85,221,220 | $80,958,567 | + 5% |
| TOTAL UNIT SALES | 350 | 397 | –12% | 6,209 | 6,312 | – 2% |
| NEW UNIT SALES | 205 | 240 | –15% | 3,917 | 3,968 | – 1% |
| USED UNIT SALES | 145 | 157 | – 8% | 2,292 | 2,344 | – 2% |

Hopes that the elections would halt the downturn most dealers have been experiencing have proved futile. Dealer Advisory Board (DAB) figures for November '84 affirm that fact, since this month's report is the worst we have seen in almost three years.

Here are some realities as reported by the DAB: Four of the five RV types were down in new unit sales from the previous November (only travel trailers were slightly up); used units were up only in camping trailers for the month; year-to-date, three RV types (motorhomes, travel trailers and camping trailers) are down; and, year-to-date, both camping trailers and travel trailers are down. For the month, sales volume was down from the previous November. Year-to-date, sales volume is only 5 percent above the previous year. Unit sales are down in *all* categories, both for the month and year-to-date.

All is not doom-and-gloom in the RV industry. Although the picture is not nearly as rosy as it could be, we are not facing a repeat of 1973-74 or 1979-80. It seems we are undergoing an adjustment at the retail level because of several factors: The proliferation of new dealers in the past couple of years has diluted sales; the new small cars have ruled on trailer towing for millions of American families; and high interest rates and high prices mean high payments.

On the plus side, 13 of the 22 DAB dealers were ahead of last year in dollars taken in. Most increases are not dramatic, but the fact that well over half of the dealers on the DAB were up from the previous year is a good indication that RV retailing can be a very good business. Profit ratings generally dropped, but that isn't unusual for this time of the year.

## MOTORHOMES

The glamorous RV product took it on the chin again, with a 22 percent drop from the previous November. Most dealers stayed about the same as last year. A few of the big fellows had big problems, and they brought down the average. The smaller dealers stayed about the same. Profits were rated from fair to good.

## TRAVEL TRAILERS

With a 6 percent increase in new unit sales over last November, trailers are the only shining light for the month, which is unusual. This generally popular RV has been struggling all year to maintain an even keel with the previous year. It is still down the greatest amount for any type. Used units aren't doing too badly, but sales are down slightly from the previous year. Profits were rated from fair to good by most reporters.

## TRUCK CAMPERS

Only two of the DAB members who stock truck campers reported sales of new units in November. The 19 percent drop represents only three units fewer than the previous November. Year-to-date, only campers and fifth-wheels are still ahead of the previous year. Profits were rated excellent.

## CAMPING TRAILERS

November is never a good month for this RV type, nor is it a good profit month on the few units that are sold. This year was normal in that respect. New unit sales were down significantly. Profits fared a little better, ranging from poor to excellent. It is surprising to see unit sales for the year-to-date in the minus column after the great start in the first six months of the year. Although very few dealers made dramatic gains, most dealers were down.

## FIFTH-WHEELS

Even this RV type, which has shown up well on the charts for a long time, has finally fallen into the minus column. The unit drop isn't great, but the fact that it is down at all is somewhat startling. Year-to-date, the 20 percent increase is still the best of all types. Profits ranged from poor to excellent. Δ

*Perspective is a compilation of data provided by RVB's Dealer Advisory Board (DAB), a group comprised of 23 dealers representing a cross-section of the U.S. Dealer body. This report is an attempt to reflect the current retail sales picture; it does not purport to indicate RV production or factory sales to dealers.*

# RVIA, NOVEMBER

The marketing committee of the Recreation Vehicle Industry Association has announced that the total number of recreational vehicles shipped from manufacturers' plants during November 1984 was 28,300 units, up 8.8% from November 1983.

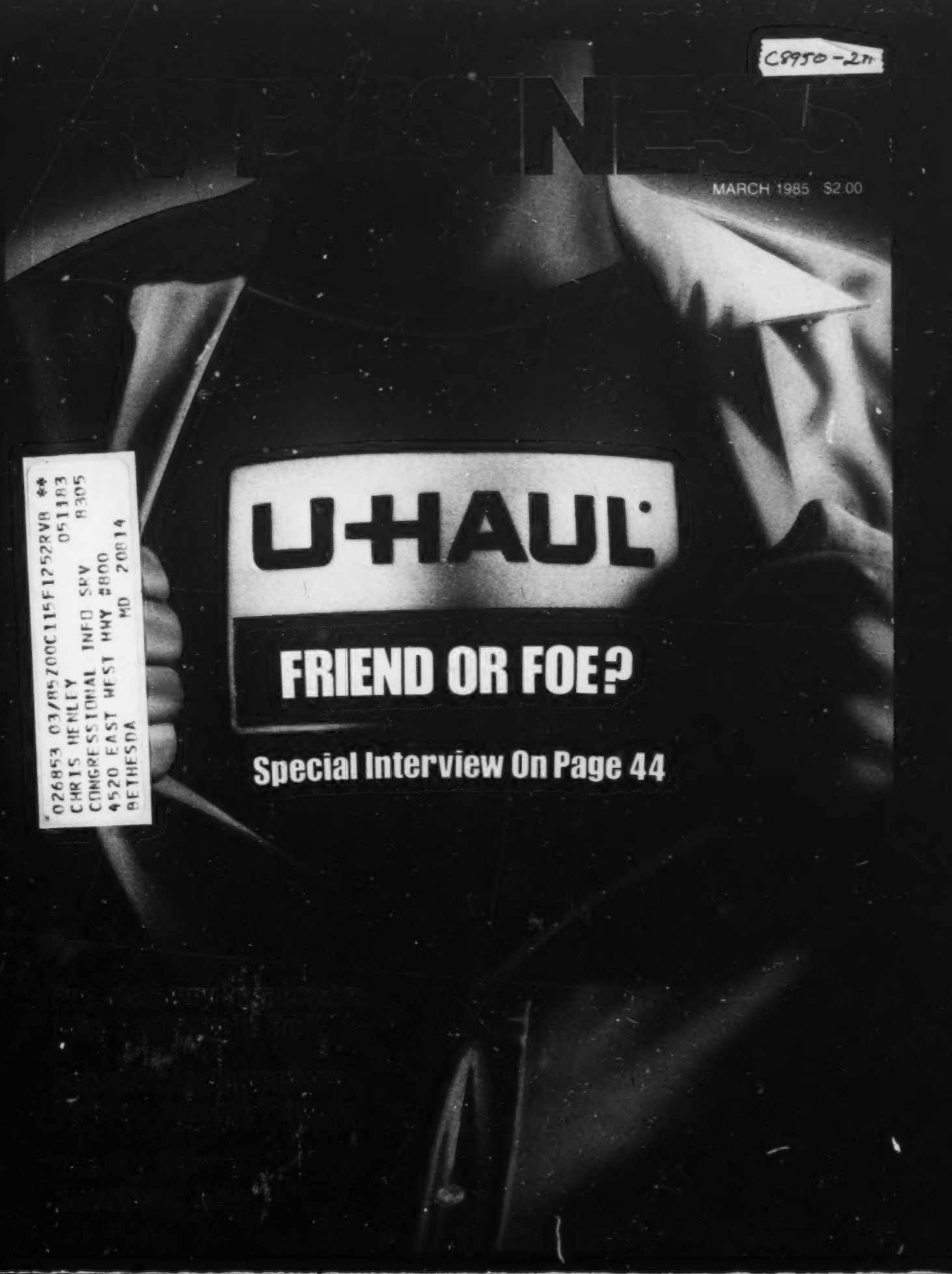
The shipment figures released by the association are contained in a report compiled for the membership by RVIA's marketing committee under the chairmanship of Allen Yoder Jr. of Jayco Incorporated, Middlebury, Indiana.

| RV shipments were as follows in November 1984 | | November 1984 | Percent Change | Cumulative 1984 | Cumulative 1983 | Percent Change |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| TRAVEL TRAILERS | 3,400 | 4,000 | −15.0% | 69,600 | 68,100 | + 2.2% |
| FIFTH-WHEELS | 1,200 | 1,500 | −20.1% | 18,500 | 17,000 | + 8.8% |
| TRUCK CAMPERS | 200 | 300 | −33.3% | 7,300 | 6,600 | +10.6% |
| MULTI-USE VEHICLES | 14,500 | 12,000 | +20.8% | 162,000 | 141,900 | +14.2% |
| TYPE A: MOTOR-HOMES | 3,600 | 2,900 | +24.1% | 38,900 | 30,800 | +26.3% |
| TYPE B: VAN CAMPERS | 700 | 500 | +40.0% | 6,600 | 5,100 | +29.4% |
| TYPE C: MINI MOTOR-HOMES | 1,800 | 2,300 | −21.7% | 31,100 | 28,600 | + 8.7% |
| FOLDING CAMPING TRAILERS | 2,900 | 2,500 | +16.0% | 38,400 | 35,100 | + 9.4% |
| TOTALS | 28,300 | 26,000 | + 8.8% | 372,400 | 333,200 | +11.8% |

C8950-211

# AUTOMOTIVE BUSINESS

MARCH 1985 $2.00




## FRIEND OR FOE?

Special Interview On Page 44

026853 03/85 Z00C115F1252RVB **
CHRIS HENLEY 051183
CONGRESSIONAL INFO SRV B305
4520 EAST WEST HWY #800
BETHESDA MD 20814

Jayco

Please send me more information on Jayco RVs and dealer programs. I currently deal in these product lines:

I'm interested in Jayco ☐ Fold-downs ☐ Travel Trailers ☐ Mini Motorhomes ☐ Fifth Wheels ☐ Truck Campers

Name

Title

Dealership

Address

City

State Zip

Telephone

Jayco, Inc.
P.O. Box 460
Middlebury, IN 46540

RVB 3/85



BEST AVAILABLE COPY

# Perspective

An analysis of RVB's monthly survey of its Dealer Advisory Board Members

GAYLORD MAXWELL

| | NEW | | | | | | USED | | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | FOR MONTH | | | YEAR-TO-DATE | | | FOR MONTH | | | YEAR-TO-DATE | | |
| | DEC '84 | DEC '83 | % CHANGE | 1984 | 1983 | % CHANGE | DEC '84 | DEC '83 | % CHANGE | 1984 | 1983 | % CHANGE |
| MOTORHOMES | 61 | 77 | –21% | 1,160 | 1,202 | – 3% | 40 | 44 | – 9% | 880 | 850 | + 4% |
| TRAVEL TRAILERS | 28 | 37 | –24% | 902 | 994 | – 9% | 37 | 35 | + 6% | 837 | 878 | – 4% |
| TRUCK CAMPERS | 13 | 14 | – 7% | 196 | 182 | + 8% | 9 | 4 | +125% | 214 | 199 | + 8% |
| CAMPING TRAILERS | 19 | 12 | +58% | 1,547 | 1,389 | +11% | 6 | 5 | + 20% | 246 | 260 | – 5% |
| FIFTH-WHEELS | 30 | 35 | –14% | 381 | 347 | +10% | 6 | 4 | +50% | 88 | 102 | –14% |

| | FOR MONTH | | | YEAR-TO-DATE | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | DEC '84 | DEC '83 | % CHANGE | 1984 | 1983 | % CHANGE |
| SALES VOLUME | $4,597,504 | $4,873,504 | – 6% | $89,812,136 | $85,278,478 | +5% |
| TOTAL UNIT SALES | 250 | 267 | – 6% | 6,451 | 6,401 | +1% |
| NEW UNIT SALES | 151 | 175 | –14% | 4,186 | 4,112 | +2% |
| USED UNIT SALES | 98 | 92 | + 7% | 2,265 | 2,289 | –1% |

The year ended with RVB's Dealer Advisory Board (DAB) about equally divided between those who were up in sales and those who were down. In December '84, there was a modest drop from the previous year in sales volume and new unit sales were fewer. Profits were generally rated lower than normal, a fact of life with end-of-the-year RV sales.

It has been a leveling off year, completing a cycle that began with the second energy crisis and was followed by a boom in '82 through early '84. Most DAB dealers had good bottom lines in '84. Indications are that seasoned dealers are heading for a relatively stable period. No doubt there will be some wrinkles as manufacturers and dealers struggle for larger shares in the marketplace, but there do not appear to be any dark clouds on the horizon. The fuel supply is good, the economy is doing well, employment is up, interest rates are down, and the public attitude about RVing is positive. Well-managed RV dealerships should have a good 1985.

## MOTORHOMES

Although the 21 percent drop for the month was considerable, new unit sales for the year-to-date are very close to those of last year. Considering the number of new competitors who came into the RV marketplace during the last year and a half, it is apparent that the old dealers held their own very well. Some were up, some were down in unit sales, but most stayed fairly close to last year in sales volume. One DAB member dropped motorhomes from his inventory during the year, and another added them. Most dealers did not consider it necessary to blow out inventory just because business was slow this the month. Even with very high motorhome prices, sales have remained relatively strong. There is every reason to believe 1985 will see a repeat performance.

## TRAVEL TRAILERS

Trailer dealers have had more than their share of problems with sales this year. Two factors are working against trailer sales: One, younger families aren't buying because of the considerable cost of buying both trailer and truck. Two, the popularity of the small car and the downsizing of all cars make it impossible to tow many trailers with today's automobiles, and a lot of people don't like trucks.

## TRUCK CAMPERS

Although sales for this RV type are up for the DAB, it should be pointed out that the increase is due primarily to one dealer whose sales have been extraordinarily good. Some of the other DAB dealers who stocked just a few units dropped even those during the year. As has always been the case, one should be in campers strongly, or not at all.

## CAMPING TRAILERS

Percentage figures for new unit sales in December are impressive, but the actual unit numbers are small. However, the 11 percent increase for the year-to-date is the best record for all RV types in this report. Some dealers have the key to success with folding camping trailers. Profits were rated from fair to good.

## FIFTH-WHEELS

The drop in December belies the fact that sales of this RV type have been very good all year. The 10 percent increase for the year-to-date in new unit sales is the second best of the five categories. Profits were rated fair. It seems quite likely that fivers will continue to be popular and for sales to increase steadily. The fact that retirees like them assures their future. Retirees have the time and the money—two very important ingredients for the success of this industry. Δ

*Perspective is a compilation of data provided by RVB's Dealer Advisory Board (DAB), a group comprised of 23 dealers representing a cross-section of the U.S. Dealer body. This report is an attempt to reflect the current retail sales picture; it does not purport to indicate RV production or factory sales to dealers.*

# RVIA, DECEMBER

The marketing committee of the Recreation Vehicle Industry Association has announced that the total number of recreational vehicles shipped from manufacturers' plants during December 1984 was 25,800 units, up 4.0% from December 1983.

The shipment figures released by the association are contained in a report compiled for the membership by RVIA's marketing committee under the chairmanship of Allen Yoder Jr. of Jayco Incorporated, Middlebury, Indiana.

| RV shipments were as follows in December 1984 | | December 1983 | Percent Change | Cumulative 1984 | Cumulative 1983 | Percent Change |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| TRAVEL TRAILERS | 3,200 | 3,800 | − 15.8% | 72,800 | 71,900 | + 1.3% |
| FIFTH-WHEELS | 1,100 | 1,100 | 0 | 19,600 | 18,100 | + 8.3% |
| TRUCK CAMPERS | 300 | 200 | + 50.0% | 7,600 | 6,800 | + 11.8% |
| MULTI-USE VEHICLES | 13,300 | 12,300 | + 8.1% | 175,300 | 154,200 | + 13.7% |
| TYPE A: MOTOR-HOMES | 3,200 | 2,600 | + 23.1% | 42,100 | 33,400 | + 26.1% |
| TYPE B: VAN CAMPERS | 500 | 500 | 0 | 7,100 | 5,600 | + 26.8% |
| TYPE C: MINI MOTOR-HOMES | 1,700 | 1,900 | − 10.5% | 32,800 | 30,500 | + 7.5% |
| FOLDING CAMPING TRAILERS | 2,500 | 2,400 | + 4.2% | 40,900 | 37,500 | + 9.1% |
| TOTALS | 25,800 | 24,800 | + 4.0% | 398,200 | 358,000 | + 11.2% |

CB7050-2

Is A Micro-mini Investigation Coming?

How To Train Salespeople

Dealers And Their Impact On RV Quality

# WHAT WE CAN LEARN FROM OTHER INDUSTRIES

026853 04/85200C115P1252RVB **
CHRIS HENLEY 051183
CONGRESSIONAL INFO SRV 8305
4520 EAST WEST HWY 800
BETHESDA MD 20814

Jayco

Please send me more information on Jayco RVs and dealer programs. I currently deal in these product lines:

I'm interested in Jayco ☐ Fold-downs
☐ Travel Trailers ☐ Mini Motorhomes
☐ Fifth Wheels ☐ Truck Campers

Name _____
Title _____
Dealership _____
Address _____
City _____
State _____ Zip _____
Telephone _____

Jayco, Inc.
P.O. Box 460
Middlebury, IN 46540

RVB 0495



BEST AVAILABLE COPY

# Perspective

An analysis of RVB's monthly survey of its Dealer Advisory Board Members

GAYLORD MAXWELL

| | NEW | | | | | | USED | | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | FOR MONTH | | | YEAR-TO-DATE | | | FOR MONTH | | | YEAR-TO-DATE | | |
| | JAN '85 | JAN '84 | % CHANGE | 1985 | 1984 | % CHANGE | JAN '85 | JAN '84 | % CHANGE | 1985 | 1984 | % CHANGE |
| MOTORHOMES | 84 | 87 | – 3% | -0- | -0- | -0- | 71 | 82 | – 13% | -0- | -0- | -0- |
| TRAVEL TRAILERS | 38 | 61 | –38% | -0- | -0- | -0- | 43 | 45 | – 4% | -0- | -0- | -0- |
| TRUCK CAMPERS | 11 | 7 | +57% | -0- | -0- | -0- | 6 | 5 | + 20% | -0- | -0- | -0- |
| CAMPING TRAILERS | 63 | 53 | +18% | -0- | -0- | -0- | 4 | 10 | – 60% | -0- | -0- | -0- |
| FIFTH-WHEELS | 20 | 29 | –31% | -0- | -0- | -0- | 10 | 4 | +150% | -0- | -0- | -0- |

| | FOR MONTH | | | YEAR-TO-DATE | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | JAN '85 | JAN '84 | % CHANGE | 1985 | 1984 | % CHANGE |
| SALES VOLUME | $6,311,315 | $6,392,018 | –1% | -0- | -0- | -0- |
| TOTAL UNIT SALES | 350 | 383 | –8% | -0- | -0- | -0- |
| NEW UNIT SALES | 216 | 237 | –8% | -0- | -0- | -0- |
| USED UNIT SALES | 134 | 146 | –8% | -0- | -0- | -0- |

The year started off a bit on the minus side. January reports from RVB's Dealer Advisory Board (DAB) show that the average dealer was down slightly from the previous year. Thirteen of the 22 DAB dealers were down in sales volume from the previous January; nine were up. Although no particular size or type of dealer seems to have the key to success to start out the year, it appears that the larger motorhome specialists manage to hold or improve their positions better than the smaller dealerships.

As is usual during this time of the year, overall profits were rated lower than usual due to "blowing-out" old inventory. There were few excellent ratings.

Reports of dealers going out of business are becoming common. One DAB member says that several marginal operations have closed up in his area and he expects others to follow suit.

It will be a tough year. Indications are that the market will be down from '84—probably not much, but definitely down. There will be a fight for sales, which means lower grosses. Good management can overcome that factor; bad management can easily sink the ship in such stormy seas.

The overall picture, however, is reasonably good. Although it is probable that sales will be down somewhat, the fact is that the RV market will be good for many dealers. There is plenty of opportunity in the RV marketplace in 1985.

## MOTORHOMES

The slight drop from last January isn't impressive. The fact that motorhome sales showed a fairly consistent decline each month during the latter part of last year indicates that dealers of this RV type may be facing a stiff fight for sales. Also, the fact that many motorhome dealers rated profits poor to fair suggests that it will be difficult to get good grosses in highly competitive areas. Adding to the problem in some areas will be the discounts offered by those who are going out of business. Still, a lot of motorhomes will be sold in '85, with many excellent profits. Good managers will get their share.

## TRAVEL TRAILERS

Trailers took it on the chin in '85. The DAB's report for January indicates that it will be another slower-than-normal year for this RV type. No one has the answer for the slowdown, but it is definitely a market condition. Trailer specialists might be wise to consider adding other RV types this year.

## TRUCK CAMPERS

The percentages of increase look good; actual unit sales do not reflect a boom, however. Perhaps the increase does suggest a better year for slide-ons. Profits were rated excellent by the dealer who sold most of the units included in this report.

## CAMPING TRAILERS

Last year, camping trailers started out with a bang. It looks like a repeat performance this year. In the latter part of '84, however, the early gains were lost. It is hoped that it won't be the case this year. Profits were rated poor to fair for the month.

## FIFTH-WHEELS

Fivers took a drastic drop in January. After a couple of years of strong sales, that is surprising. Both of the DAB dealers who specialize in fifth-wheels were down for the month. Profits were rated good. Δ

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# RVIA, JANUARY

The marketing committee of the Recreation Vehicle Industry Association (RVIA) has announced that the total number of recreational vehicles shipped from manufacturers' plants during January 1985 was 28,900 units, down 0.3% from January 1984.

The shipment figures released by the association are contained in a report compiled for the membership by RVIA's marketing committee under the chairmanship of Allen Yoder Jr. of Jayco Incorporated, Middlebury, Indiana.

| RV shipments were as follows in Jan. 1985 | | Jan. 1984 | Percent Change | Cumulative 1985 | Cumulative 1984 | Percent Change |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| TRAVEL TRAILERS | 5,000 | 7,100 | -29.6% | 5,000 | 7,100 | -29.6% |
| FIFTH-WHEELS | 1,600 | 1,500 | + 6.7% | 1,600 | 1,500 | + 6.7% |
| TRUCK CAMPERS | 400 | 300 | +33.3% | 400 | 300 | +33.3% |
| MULTI-USE VEHICLES | 13,400 | 11,000 | +21.8% | 13,400 | 11,000 | +21.8% |
| TYPE A: MOTOR-HOMES | 3,200 | 3,400 | - 5.9% | 3,200 | 3,400 | - 5.9% |
| TYPE B: VAN CAMPERS | 500 | 400 | +25.0% | 500 | 400 | +25.0% |
| TYPE C: MINI MOTOR-HOMES | 2,200 | 2,800 | -21.4% | 2,200 | 2,800 | -21.4% |
| FOLDING CAMPING TRAILERS | 2,600 | 2,500 | + 4.0% | 2,600 | 2,500 | + 4.0% |
| TOTALS | 28,900 | 29,000 | - 0.3% | 28,900 | 29,000 | - 0.3% |

# WDA QUARTERLY SALES FIGURES

*RV Business* publishes a quarterly report of sales statistics from the Warehouse Distributors Association (WDA). The chart shown here is based upon a representative sampling of WDA members, as compiled in the fourth quarter of 1984. While these statistics are not intended to be fully indicative of the sales volume among distributors in the RV and MH industries, they are presented here as an insight into the supplier/distributor industry.

**SALES VOLUME**

| | FOURTH-QUARTER SALES VOLUME | |
|---|---|---|
| | PERCENT CHANGE 1983 to 1984 | RANGE OF CHANGE |
| REGION 1 | + 5.3% | +28.6% to -14.3% |
| REGION 2 | +18.4% | +34.1% to -52.1% |
| REGION 3 | + 8.0% | +28.0% to -14.7% |
| REGION 4 | - .9% | +22.4% to -23.4% |
| REGION 5 | + 6.5% | +69.8% to -55.4% |
| REGION 6 | +11.1% | +98.7% to -13.4% |

**Region 1:** Connecticut, Delaware, Maine, Maryland, Massachusetts, New Hampshire, New Jersey, New York, Pennsylvania, Rhode Island, Vermont, Virginia, West Virginia and Washington, D.C.; **Region 2:** Alabama, Florida, Georgia, Mississippi, North and South Carolina, and Tennessee; **Region 3:** Illinois, Indiana, Iowa, Kentucky, Michigan, Minnesota, Missouri, Nebraska, North and South Dakota, Ohio and Wisconsin; **Region 4:** Arkansas, Colorado, Kansas, Louisiana, Oklahoma, New Mexico and Texas; **Region 5:** Alaska, Arizona, California, Hawaii, Idaho, Montana, Nevada, Oregon, Utah, Washington and Wyoming; **Region 6:** Canada.

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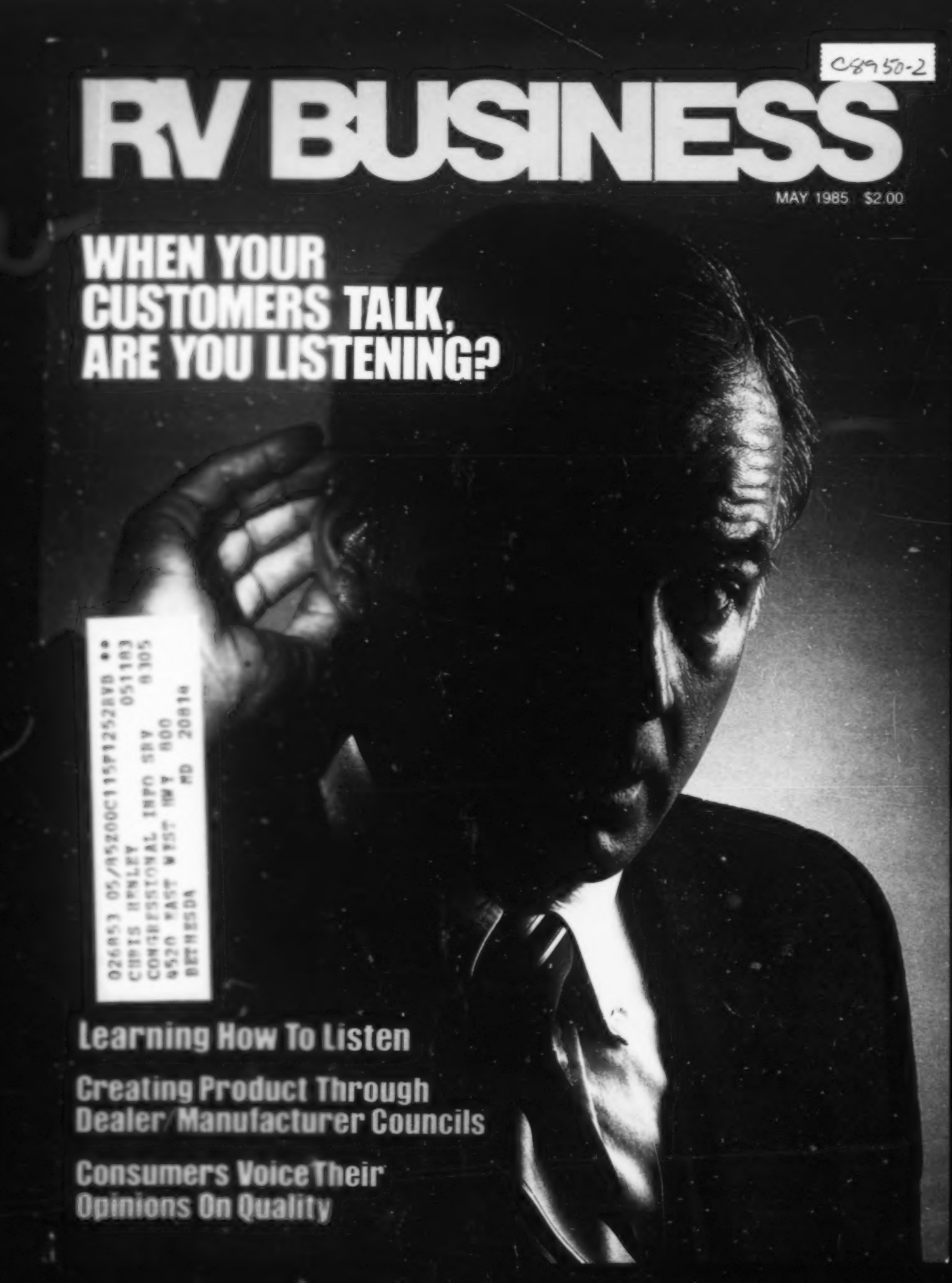
# RV BUSINESS

MAY 1985 $2.00

## WHEN YOUR CUSTOMERS TALK, ARE YOU LISTENING?



02685) 05/A5200C115P1252RVB **
CURTIS HENLEY 051103
CONGRESSIONAL INFO SRV 0105
9520 EAST WEST HWY 600
BETHESDA MD 20814

### Learning How To Listen

### Creating Product Through Dealer/Manufacturer Councils

### Consumers Voice Their Opinions On Quality

Please send me more information on Jayco RVs and dealer programs. I currently deal in these product lines

I'm interested in Jayco: ☐ Fold-downs ☐ Travel Trailers ☐ Mini Motorhomes ☐ Fifth Wheels ☐ Truck Campers

Name
Title
Dealership
Address
City
State Zip
Telephone

Jayco, Inc.
P.O. Box 460
Middlebury IN 46540

RVB 0585

# RV BUSINESS

A TL ENTERPRISES PUBLICATION — MAY 1985/VOL. 36, NO. 2

## FEATURES

| | | |
|---|---|---|
| **THE SOUND OF SALES** *Colleen Feurich* | 38 | Learn to listen your way to sales. |
| **DEALER/MANUFACTURER COUNCILS** *Sheryl Davis* | 46 | Cooperation begets better sales, better products. |
| **QUALITY** *Bob Longsdorf* | 55 | Last, but far from least, are consumers and the quality process. |
| **BARTERING** *Don Magary* | 62 | Cash sales aren't always the best sales, says the bartering king. |
| **ORPHAN PARTS** | 67 | Who's who and where in the business of hard-to-find replacement parts. |
| **1986 DEALER OF THE YEAR** | 72 | You and your customers can both win! |
| **AD OF THE MONTH** *Ben Sussman* | 95 | How to pick a loch. |

## DEPARTMENTS

| | | | |
|---|---|---|---|
| **EDITORIAL** *Michael Schneider* | 5 | **SHIPMENTS** | 26 |
| **LETTERS** | 8 | **RV PEOPLE** | 28 |
| **MAGARY** *Don Magary* | 12 | **OERTLE** *V. Lee Oertle* | 30 |
| **MAXWELL** *Gaylord Maxwell* | 14 | **INDUSTRY NEWS** *Olga Markowitz* | 77 |
| **WILMATH** *Cliff Wilmath* | 16 | **MANAGEMENT MARQUEE** | 99 |
| **FISCALINE** *John Thompson* | 23 | **PROFITMAKERS** | 108 |
| **PERSPECTIVE** *Gaylord Maxwell* | 24 | **CALENDAR** | 116 |
| **ASSOCIATIONS** | 25 | **BACK PAGE** *Sheryl Davis* | 118 |

**ON THE COVER:** You don't have to be all ears in order to enjoy good sales and improved profits—but it helps. Dealers are listening to consumers (see page 55), manufacturers are listening to dealers (see page 46), and everybody is listening to the Sound of Sales (page 38). Photo: Steve Broadd.s.

# Perspective

An analysis of RVB's monthly survey of its Dealer Advisory Board Members

GAYLORD MAXWELL

| | NEW | | | | | | USED | | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | FOR MONTH | | | YEAR-TO-DATE | | | FOR MONTH | | | YEAR-TO-DATE | | |
| | FEB '85 | FEB '84 | % CHANGE | 1985 | 1984 | % CHANGE | FEB '85 | FEB '84 | % CHANGE | 1985 | 1984 | % CHANGE |
| MOTORHOMES | 107 | 105 | + 1% | 185 | 192 | – 3 | 103 | 105 | – 1% | 176 | 183 | – 3 |
| TRAVEL TRAILERS | 77 | 90 | –14% | 122 | 162 | –24 | 60 | 84 | –28% | 107 | 132 | –41 |
| TRUCK CAMPERS | 9 | 12 | –25% | 20 | 19 | + 5 | 10 | 23 | –56% | 15 | 31 | –51 |
| CAMPING TRAILERS | 106 | 167 | –36% | 169 | 220 | –23 | 25 | 29 | –13 | 28 | 39 | –28 |
| FIFTH-WHEELS | 33 | 34 | – 2% | 51 | 61 | –16 | 6 | 9 | –33% | 17 | 13 | +30 |

| | FOR MONTH | | | YEAR-TO-DATE | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | FEB '85 | FEB '84 | % CHANGE | 1985 | 1984 | % CHANGE |
| SALES VOLUME | $8,147,635 | $8,378,274 | –2% | $14,226,352 | $14,934,051 | – 4 |
| TOTAL UNIT SALES | 536 | 658 | –18% | 890 | 1082 | –17 |
| NEW UNIT SALES | 332 | 408 | –18% | 547 | 684 | –20 |
| USED UNIT SALES | 204 | 250 | –18% | 343 | 398 | –13 |

RV sales in February were down from the previous year. Data provided by RVB's Dealer Advisory Board (DAB) indicates that the average dealer was down both in units and in sales volume. Both new and used took very noticeable drops. Profits, too, were down according to most dealers. Only new motorhomes and used truck campers managed to stay on the plus side—and they barely made it.

Sales volume didn't drop as drastically as unit sales—2 percent in February and 4 percent for the year-to-date. It seems that more expensive units are being sold.

Competition is extremely keen in some areas, particularly where dealers are closing up or where auto dealers are dropping RVs. Two years ago, most dealers were making excellent grosses; now they consider themselves lucky if they can make what they consider good profits. Probably that is the way the year will go.

## MOTORHOMES

The average motorhome dealer is barely holding his own in unit sales. Actually, the DAB shows a very slight decrease for the year-to-date. Most of the motorhome specialists—especially the larger ones—are still getting their share of the market, but at the expense of profits. Two of the larger DAB members report that dealers going out of the motorhome business are hurting their sales. Dealers who do not specialize in motorized, but who stock a few units, are finding it extremely difficult to compete profitably. Used units are selling well at about the same pace as new units.

Overall, motorhomes received one of the worst profit ratings they have had in a couple of years. No one rated them excellent. Most called them fair and two said they were poor.

## TRAVEL TRAILERS

Sales of this type have been sluggish for more than a year. This year appears to be different only in that they are even more sluggish. The drop of 24 percent in sales of new units year-to-date indicates that it will take a miracle for significant recovery in the months to come.

Even used sales have suffered. Although it is quite early in the season, it will take some doing to reduce the current 41 percent sales lag.

Travel trailer profits were rated from fair to good.

## TRUCK CAMPERS

Our DAB camper specialist ran a bit behind in February, which brought the averages down. However, the unit differences aren't great either for the month or for the year-to-date.

The used camper market appears to be very weak at this time. It should get better with the coming of spring as people look for inexpensive ways to vacation. Those with pickups will find that there are plenty of used units on the market.

Camper profits were rated excellent for new units.

## CAMPER TRAILERS

Although the 36 percent drop suggests an extremely bad year in the making, such isn't really the case. Last year, one of the DAB dealers had an unusual sale during which he sold a lot of folding camping trailers at very low prices. This year, he didn't. Thus, the figures do not reflect a normal situation. However, a couple of the members of the board who sell a lot camping trailers aren't doing as well as they normally do at the early shows.

Profits were rated fair to good.

## FIFTH-WHEELS

Fifth-wheels have been on the upswing for DAB members for two or three years. The apparent turnaround is surprising. Sales haven't fallen apart, but minus figures in this category haven't been seen for a long time. Perhaps it is a temporary condition.

Profits were rated all the way from fair to excellent. Δ

*Perspective is a compilation of data provided by RVB's Dealer Advisory Board (DAB), a group comprised of 23 dealers representing a cross-section of the U.S. Dealer body. This report is an attempt to reflect the current retail sales picture; it does not purport to indicate RV production or factory sales to dealers.*

# RVIA, FEBRUARY

The marketing committee of the Recreation Vehicle Industry Association has announced that the total number of recreational vehicles shipped from manufacturers' plants during February 1985 was 31,300 units, down 3.7% from February 1984.

The shipment figures released by the association are contained in a report compiled for the membership by RVIA's marketing committee under the chairmanship of Allen Yoder Jr. of Jayco Incorporated, Middlebury, Indiana.

| RV shipments were as follows in February 1985 | | February 1984 | Percent Change | Cumulative 1985 | Cumulative 1984 | Percent Change |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| TRAVEL TRAILERS | 4,500 | 6,100 | −26.2% | 9,500 | 13,200 | −28.0% |
| FIFTH-WHEELS | 1,400 | 1,500 | − 6.7% | 3,000 | 3,000 | 0 |
| TRUCK CAMPERS | 500 | 700 | −28.6% | 900 | 1,000 | −10.0% |
| MULTI-USE VEHICLES | 14,800 | 12,400 | +19.4% | 28,200 | 23,400 | +20.5% |
| TYPE A: MOTOR-HOMES | 3,500 | 3,800 | − 7.9% | 6,700 | 7,200 | − 6.9% |
| TYPE B: VAN CAMPERS | 300 | 900 | −66.7% | 800 | 1,300 | −38.5% |
| TYPE C: MINI MOTOR-HOMES | 3,000 | 3,700 | −18.9% | 5,200 | 6,500 | −20.0% |
| FOLDING CAMPING TRAILERS | 3,300 | 3,400 | − 2.9% | 5,900 | 5,900 | 0 |
| TOTALS | 31,300 | 32,500 | − 3.7% | 60,200 | 61,500 | − 2.1% |

# INDUSTRY NEWS

O. MARKOWITZ, NEWS COORDINATOR



## Good Sam Introduces New Program: Take A Friend Camping

*Agoura, Calif.*—The Good Sam Club® has presented a new program to introduce friends and relatives to the RV lifestyle. Titled "Take A Friend Camping," this new program has been designed to lend a helping hand to newcomers to ensure that their first RV experiences are successful ones.

*A Good Samer gives some RVing tips to a friend he has taken camping.*

A Good Samer can arrange for a low-cost rental motorhome by placing a single phone call. A nationwide rental program has been organized through Altman's America to provide friends of the Good Sam member a 19- to 24-foot mini motorhome at a discount rate of $99 for four days and three nights. There are no mileage charges for the first 300 miles; after that, mileage costs are 18 cents per mile. The motorhome can be picked up after 1 P.M. on the first day and returned before 11 A.M. on the fourth day. Additional days can be reserved, but the rate then falls under the standard pricing policy.

Motorhomes can be reserved and picked up at any one of the Altman's America nationwide rental agencies, but the Good Sam member must show his membership card at the time of pickup. Rentals are subject to availability and some holidays are excluded. Participants in the program are advised to plan ahead since availability of rental units is not guaranteed during busy summer months.

In addition to sharing an RV experience with friends who have been curious about RVing but not quite ready to try it on their own, the Good Sam members participating in this program will receive two specially designed patches saying, "I Took A Friend Camping."

If those friends decide to purchase a motorhome, their rental charges can be applied toward the cost as long as the rig is bought at Altman's within 21 days of the rental date. —*Gail Harrington*

## New Study Reveals RVs As Economical Travel Means

*Chantilly, Va.*—The results of a study, conducted by international CPA firm Pannell Kerr Forster during the summer of 1984, revealed that traveling by recreational vehicle is overwhelmingly the most economical way to travel. On the average, vacationing in an RV costs 50 percent less than comparable car/hotel vacations, 67 percent less than bus/hotel and train/hotel trips, and 75 percent less than air/hotel vacations.

Pannell Kerr Forster, known for its particular expertise in the tourism and hospitality industries, conducted the study using a hypothetical travel party of two adults and two children traveling between 38 selected city pairs in the United States. As an example, the CPA firm found that a family of four taking an average eight-night vacation would spend $516 using the most costly type of RV, staying at campgrounds and cooking a majority of their meals in their vehicle or outdoor at the campsite. The same family would spend about $1055 traveling in the family car, staying in one motel/hotel room and eating most of their meals in restaurants. They would spend $1527 by bus/hotel; $1534 by train/hotel; and $1946 for air/hotel accommodations for a comparable eight-night vacation. Findings for short weekend vacations and three-week cross-country trips were similar.

The study was sponsored by the Go Camping America Committee, a national organization representing Recreation Vehicle Industry Association, Recreation Vehicle Dealers Association and National Campground Owners Association. Copies of the report are available for $15 from the Go Camping America Committee, P.O. Box 2999, Reston, Virginia 22090.

| Vacation Type Transport Mode/Accommodation | Trip Duration: Two Night | Four Night | Eight Night | Twelve Night | Sixteen Night | Twenty-One Night |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| A. Car/Folding Camping Trailer | $ 130 | $ 236 | $ 436 | $ 613 | $ 833 | $1,082 |
| B. Light-Duty Truck/Truck Camper | 147 | 266 | 483 | 677 | 925 | 1,197 |
| C. Motorhome | 158 | 283 | 512 | 713 | 977 | 1,266 |
| D. Car or Truck/Travel Trailer | 165 | 286 | 516 | 711 | 977 | 1,274 |
| E. Car/Motels or Hotel | 287 | 555 | 1,055 | 1,412 | 1,927 | 2,584 |
| F. Intercity Bus/Motels or Hotels | 474 | 883 | 1,527 | 2,002 | 2,694 | 3,690 |
| G. Train/Motels or Hotels | 417 | 918 | 1,534 | 2,012 | 2,732 | 3,738 |
| H. Airline/Motels or Hotels | 808 | 1,384 | 1,946 | 2,703 | 3,393 | 4,680 |

*Source: Pannell Kerr Forster*

*Cost comparison of recreational vehicle vacations vs. other types of vacations.*

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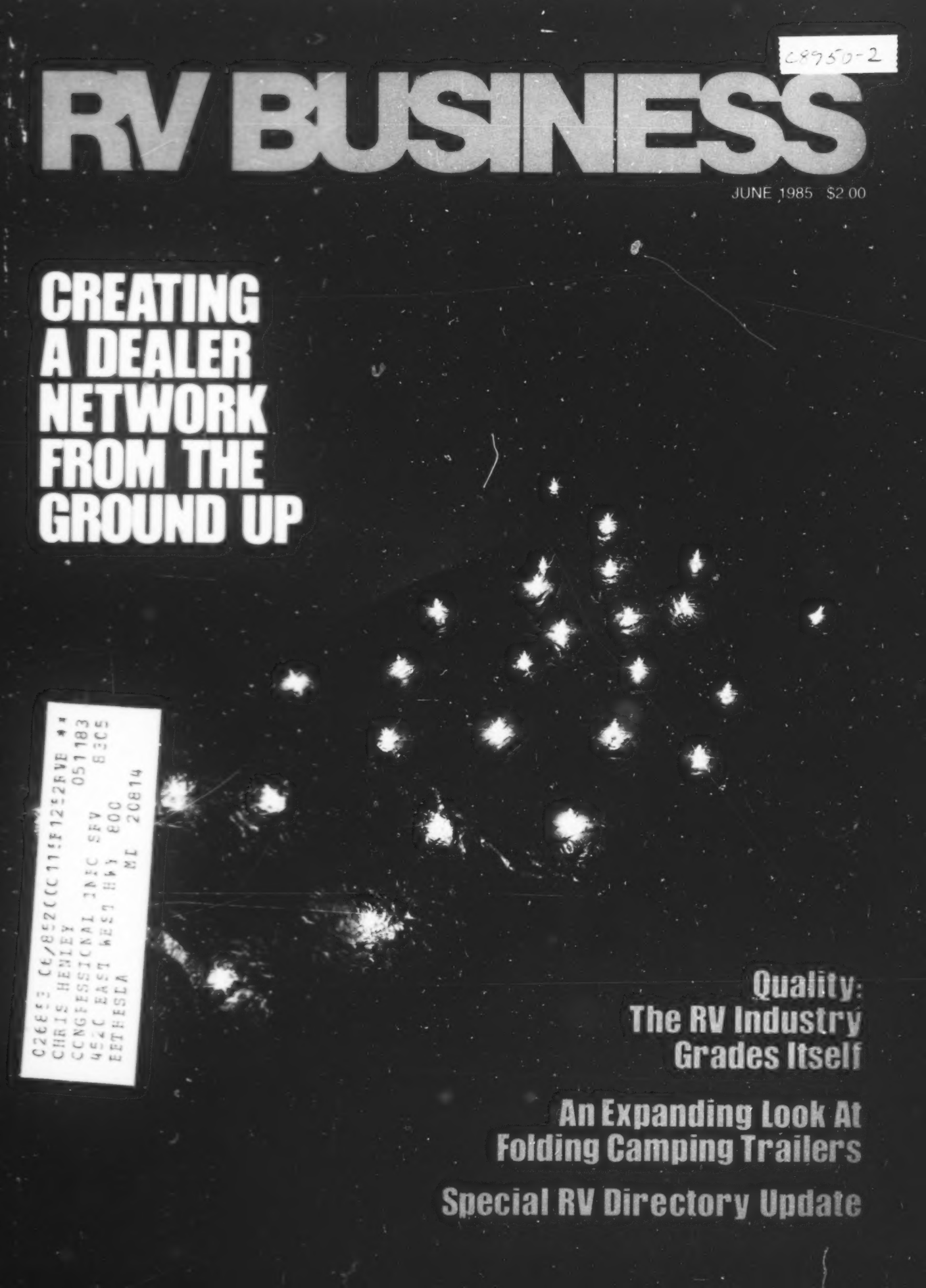
# RV BUSINESS

JUNE 1985 $2.00

## CREATING A DEALER NETWORK FROM THE GROUND UP



CHRIS HENLEY
CONGRESSIONAL INDUSTRIES
4520 EAST WEST HWY 600
BETHESDA MD 20814

## Quality: The RV Industry Grades Itself

## An Expanding Look At Folding Camping Trailers

## Special RV Directory Update

# RV BUSINESS

A TL ENTERPRISES PUBLICATION JUNE 1985/VOL. 36, NO. 3


## FEATURES


| | | |
|---|---|---|
| **DEALER NETWORK** *Ann Park* | 36 | The manufacturers' crucial step in their marketing process |
| **HOW RV BUILDERS SET UP THEIR DEALER NETWORK** | 38 | How to go about building a retail outlet system |
| **QUALITY** *Bob Longsdorf* | 48 | The RV industry looks at itself and grades its achievements |
| **FOLDING CAMPING TRAILERS** *Sheryl Davis* | 60 | What's new in the marketplace |
| **YELLOW PAGES** *Alan W. Farrant* | 74 | Finding the gold in the *Yellow Pages* |
| **DEALER OF THE YEAR** | 88 | The search continues |
| **DIRECTORY UPDATE** *Cindy Lang* | 91 | A midyear tear-out |
| **AD OF THE MONTH** *Ben Sussman* | 111 | Water on the rocks |


## DEPARTMENTS


| | | | |
|---|---|---|---|
| **EDITORIAL** *Michael Schneider* | 5 | **ASSOCIATIONS** *Olga Markowitz* | 33 |
| **LETTERS** | 8 | **SHIPMENTS** | 34 |
| **MAGARY** *Don Magary* | 12 | **INDUSTRY NEWS** *Olga Markowitz* | 97 |
| **OERTLE** *V. Lee Oertle* | 18 | **PROFITMAKERS** | 113 |
| **GUESTVIEW** *James Brubeck* | 24 | **CALENDAR** | 116 |
| **FISCALINE** *John Thompson* | 31 | **BACK PAGE** *Sheryl Davis* | 118 |
| **PERSPECTIVE** *Gaylord Maxwell* | 32 | | |


**ON THE COVER:** Webster defines "network" as "an interconnected or interrelated chain, group or system." The RV industry defines it as "profitability." Discover how RV manufacturers are establishing profitable dealer networks—and how you can, too, on page 36. Photo: Hal Hunt.

# Perspective

An analysis of RVB's monthly survey of its Dealer Advisory Board Members

GAYLORD MAXWELL

| | NEW | | | | | | USED | | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | FOR MONTH | | | YEAR-TO-DATE | | | FOR MONTH | | | YEAR-TO-DATE | | |
| | MARCH '85 | MARCH '84 | % CHANGE | 1985 | 1984 | % CHANGE | MARCH '85 | MARCH '84 | % CHANGE | 1985 | 1984 | % CHANGE |
| MOTORHOMES | 136 | 144 | – 6% | 325 | 333 | – 2 | 96 | 115 | –17% | 272 | 306 | –11 |
| TRAVEL TRAILERS | 125 | 111 | +13% | 230 | 269 | –14 | 110 | 126 | –13% | 195 | 257 | –24 |
| TRUCK CAMPERS | 15 | 24 | –38% | 35 | 43 | –19 | 19 | 17 | +12% | 33 | 48 | –31 |
| CAMPING TRAILERS | 176 | 238 | –26% | 350 | 468 | –25 | 54 | 39 | +38% | 80 | 69 | +16 |
| FIFTH-WHEELS | 40 | 45 | –11% | 80 | 104 | –23 | 15 | 14 | + 7% | 31 | 27 | +15 |

| | FOR MONTH | | | YEAR-TO-DATE | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | MARCH '85 | MARCH '84 | % CHANGE | 1985 | 1984 | % CHANGE |
| SALES VOLUME | $10,967,417 | $10,699,034 | +3% | $24,142,473 | $25,659,186 | – 6 |
| TOTAL UNIT SALES | 786 | 873 | –10% | 1631 | 1924 | –15 |
| NEW UNIT SALES | 492 | 562 | –12% | 1020 | 1217 | –16 |
| USED UNIT SALES | 294 | 311 | – 5% | 611 | 707 | –14 |

In some respects, March was a good month for the Dealer Advisory Board (DAB) and in other ways it was quite poor. Sales volume was higher than for the comparable month last year (up 3 percent), but with the exception of travel trailers, all categories of new unit sales were down. In fact, of the 28 items measured in this report, 21 were down and 7 were up.

The fact that many dealers are selling fewer units but taking in more dollars indicates that more expensive units are being purchased. The actual count for March shows 13 members of the DAB up in dollar volume and 9 down from the previous year.

March ran just a little stronger than the year-to-date tally which might suggest that things are picking up some. Unless something drastic happens to change the picture, however, earlier predictions that 1985 will be down may generally be correct.

Used unit sales have fallen off some, but that picture may change considerably in the next three months. Profits were rated from good to excellent.

## MOTORHOMES

Most motorhome dealers held their own for the month. The difference between new unit sales last March and this is very small. Large dealers generally did a little better than they did last year and, surprisingly, a few of the smaller DAB dealers scored well. Larger dealers seem to be doing much better with Class A's than they are with C's; however, sales of C's are picking up for some DAB members.

Profits were rated from fair to good.

## TRAVEL TRAILERS

After months of minuses, new travel trailer sales jumped into the plus column for a change. For the DAB generally, it was a rather even split between those who are ahead of last March's numbers and those who were behind.

Year-to-date, new sales have been sluggish. Dealers who used to sell 30 units a month now have to settle for a third of that number—and they are happy to get it. Used sales are down considerably for the year-to-date. There are a lot of used units on dealers' lots.

Profits were rated all the way from poor to good.

## TRUCK CAMPERS

This category had the sharpest percentage drop of any in new unit sales. Last year, five members of the DAB reported sales for the month; this year there were only three. Campers are a tough business for the average multiline RV dealer.

Profits were rated excellent by two of the three dealers who made new sales, and fair by the other.

## CAMPING TRAILERS

After a good 1984, it looks as if folding camping trailers are going to take it on the chin this year. Down 26 percent for the month and 25 percent for the year-to-date, it will take some doing to pull back to even; however, it is possible. Some camping trailer specialists have the potential to perform miracles at shows and can drastically change figures quickly.

Profits were generally rated from fair to good—a poor rating for this RV type.

## FIFTH-WHEELS

After two good years, it looks as if fivers are in for a lull. Although the DAB picked up in March, the numbers for new units are way down. Used sales are good, however.

Profits ranged from fair to good—considerably different from excellent ratings for many, many months. Δ

*Perspective is a compilation of data provided by RVB's Dealer Advisory Board (DAB), a group comprised of 23 dealers representing a cross-section of the U.S. Dealer body. This report is an attempt to reflect the current retail sales picture; it does not purport to indicate RV production or factory sales to dealers.*

# RVIA, MARCH

The marketing committee of the Recreation Vehicle Industry Association has announced that the total number of recreational vehicles shipped from manufacturers' plants during March 1985 was 34,400 units, down 17.3% from March 1984.

The shipment figures released by the association are contained in a report compiled for the membership by RVIA's marketing committee under the chairmanship of Allen Yoder Jr. of Jayco Incorporated, Middlebury, Indiana.

| RV shipments were as follows in March 1985 | | March 1984 | Percent Change | Cumulative 1985 | Cumulative 1984 | Percent Change |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| TRAVEL TRAILERS | 7,000 | 8,400 | −16.7% | 16,500 | 21,600 | −23.6% |
| FIFTH-WHEELS | 2,000 | 2,000 | 0 | 5,000 | 5,000 | 0 |
| TRUCK CAMPERS | 700 | 1,100 | −36.4% | 1,600 | 2,100 | −23.8% |
| MULTI-USE VEHICLES | 13,600 | 17,000 | +20.0% | 41,800 | 40,400 | + 3.5% |
| TYPE A: MOTOR-HOMES | 3,000 | 4,100 | −26.8% | 9,700 | 11,300 | −14.2% |
| TYPE B: VAN CAMPERS | 700 | 500 | +40.0% | 1,500 | 1,800 | −16.7% |
| TYPE C: MINI MOTOR-HOMES | 2,800 | 3,800 | −26.3% | 8,000 | 10,300 | −22.3% |
| FOLDING CAMPING TRAILERS | 4,600 | 4,700 | − 2.1% | 10,500 | 10,600 | − 0.9% |
| TOTALS | 34,400 | 41,600 | −17.3% | 94,600 | 103,100 | − 8.2% |

# FOLDING CAMPING TRAILERS

*Jayco "J" Series*

*Skamper 170C*

*Rapido Caravan*

*Rockwood*

*Freedom 400*

# Often overlooked, it's high time to take another look at this valuable segment of our industry

SHERYL DAVIS

To a potential RV consumer, one of the most intriguing notions about this industry is the fact that it has something for everybody. Units are available at retail from less than a couple of thousand dollars to a few *hundred* thousand dollars, offering buyers a fairy-tale wonderland of choices in between.

Where does the potential RV buyer begin the journey? Where is the trailhead into RV-land? That depends on need, finances and aesthetic preference. For many, all those determinants first come together in the folding camping trailer.

In 1984, 40,900 folding camping trailers were shipped—a full 10 percent of total 1984 RV shipments. This RV type is often the camper's first move up off the rock-hard, boulder bumps, stone-cold ground of tent camping into the world of RVing. It is also the frequent stepping stone into more posh camping digs, something all RV manufacturers and dealers can appreciate. In fact, this RV type can almost be used as a wind sock to check the direction and the strength of the winds of the general RV market. The reason is that newcomers to RVing often try out their wings with folding camping trailers. Later, as they mature in the RV lifestyle, they move up to other, more expensive classes of RVs. If the feed from the folding camping trailers is strong, the RV industry will be strong. If the output from this source dries up, you can pretty much bet that other RV types will be having a thin time down the road.

Why do so many consumers gravitate to this type of RV as an entry-level unit? When *RV Business* polled dealers and manufacturers, three general opinions surfaced repeatedly: the price is right, the tow weight is compatible with today's lightweight vehicles and it puts RVers in touch with nature much as tent camping does, but with amenities that

## FOLDING CAMPING TRAILERS *continued*

allow for a much-appreciated indulgence of comfort.

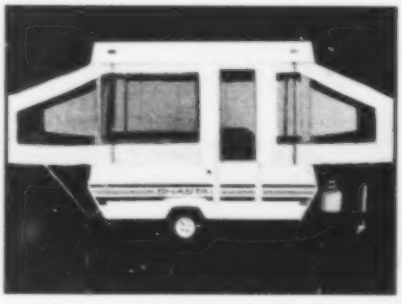
As far as price is concerned—and it is a concern to first-time RV buyers, especially—folding camping trailers are hard to beat, no matter what model or innovation might be the choice. Of the manufacturers who responded to our query, the lowest suggested retail prices reported were the Time Out 4-sleeper at $1350, Continental Industries' TravLite 25 at $1475 and a Coleman unit, which was $1495. For those who possess harder purses, Jayco's high-line entry prices out at approximately $7700. (Of course, all prices vary with the region and in regard to shipping.) Not only does the RV industry in general offer a wide range of financial choices to the buyer, but even the relatively narrow industry segment of folding camping trailers offers an extensive scale of selection for the judicious purchaser.

The importance of price for these units can be seen when one looks at the buyer demographics. According to the manufacturers who responded to our inquiries, their average buyer is a first- or second-time buyer between 30 and 40 years of age; earns a $20,000-$30,000 annual income; is married and has a couple of children; is well-educated and technically knowledgeable; and is either a professional employee, a skilled worker or is in management.

One exception to this demographic profile is found in the customers of Continental Industries' TravLite Model 123. Designed for motorcycles but towable by subcompact cars, TravLites sell to middle-age couples who are active in motorcycle touring.

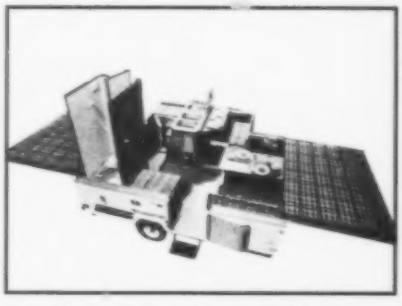
Folding camping trailers meet consumer requirements for towing weight, also. Since economics is frequently uppermost in the minds of buyers of this type, they often have fuel-economical cars. That, more often than not, translates into a smaller vehicle with less towing capability. Weight varies considerably with the unit, of course, but here are some examples of just how very towable this type of trailer can be: Kompact Kamp Mini-Mate, 500 pounds; Coleman's new Colorado (actually the revised Aspen), 575 pounds; Continental's TravLite 25, 600 pounds; Four Seasons' low-end model, 692 pounds; Freedom's 200, 300 and 400 models, from 690-850 pounds; T.O. Corporation's Time Out four-sleeper, 740 pounds; Texson's Cherokee five-sleeper, 810 pounds; the Valor Valiant VV-5, VV-6 from New Paris En-

*Viking Spirit*

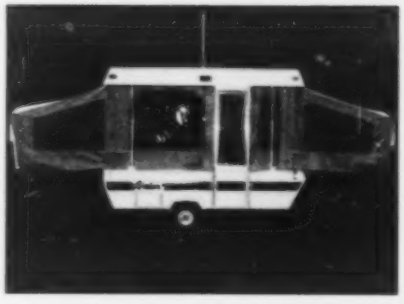


*Shasta 1650*

*Palomino Fold-a-Wall*



*Four Seasons Chapparal Eagle I*



*New Paris Valor Warrior*

*Sun-Lite Red Bird III*

*Northstar T1600*

terprises, 885 pounds; the Rockwood 706, 950 pounds; and Skamper's 114C, 980 pounds.

Towability is important to the consumer, too, of course. It is hard to beat folding camping trailers for towability. Their inherent low profile allows good rear-window visibility from the tow vehicle. It also cuts down on fuel-guzzling wind resistance. In addition, many manufacturers have streamlined their units even more for increased aerodynamics. The Coleman Company conducted a test on one of its units and found that, under the conditions of the test, towing added "only about one gallon of fuel consumption per 100 miles traveled."

Like the kid sister who "suddenly" turns into a stunning debutant, folding camping trailers are beginning to blossom. What used to be little more than an orange crate on wheels, carrying a few folding chairs and a couple of sleeping bags, now sports amenities that—be they ever so humble—sometimes rival Home Sweet Home. Today's folding camping trailers may be equipped with electricity, real refrigerators, stoves, running water, heating systems—even showers and air conditioning.

There are innovative breakthroughs every year. Sometimes, though, it is difficult to see just what these wonderful appointments are, especially if one is not in the habit of perusing the market each year with an eye open to change. But this year, there are a number of important changes along with the lesser ones. Some of these changes impart an air of respectability and durability to these units. It is worth noting that, even though Coleman and Starcraft hold far and away the lion's share of the folding camping trailer market, many of the smaller, less-well-known companies are making great strides in technical and aesthetic aspects of this RV type.

Bonair units, for example, have four independent cables that elevate the roof. Says Export Director Claude Côté, "Even if one cable breaks, the trailer can still be put up with the remaining three." Starcraft has also done work on its lift system. Its big news is a positive stop mechanism on its crank-up lift system which, says President Don Cuzzocrea, prevents overcrank. It is reassuring to note that safety seems to be uppermost in the corporate mind of these and other manufacturers.

Skamper has a patented crank-up raising system, rather than an electric one. They say it is because the manual system does not require as many moving parts—which can fail. The fully enclosed single-cable system is accessible from beneath the trailer. A five-year guarantee is offered.

Jayco features a lifter system that is interesting, if not new. Sherman Hansen, head of sales and marketing, notes that "it is fully enclosed inside the unit to protect it from dirt and moisture. It requires only one person to operate, and the lifter posts do not have cables running inside them to tangle and break." The lifter system is covered by a lifetime limited warranty to the original owner.

The Esterel lift system utilizes gas-cylinder pistons (the type used to lift the rear hatch on many small cars) for easy setup. The entire unit is a rather nifty affair. For the nitty gritty lowdown, see the complete report in our sister publication, *Trailer Life*, January 1985.

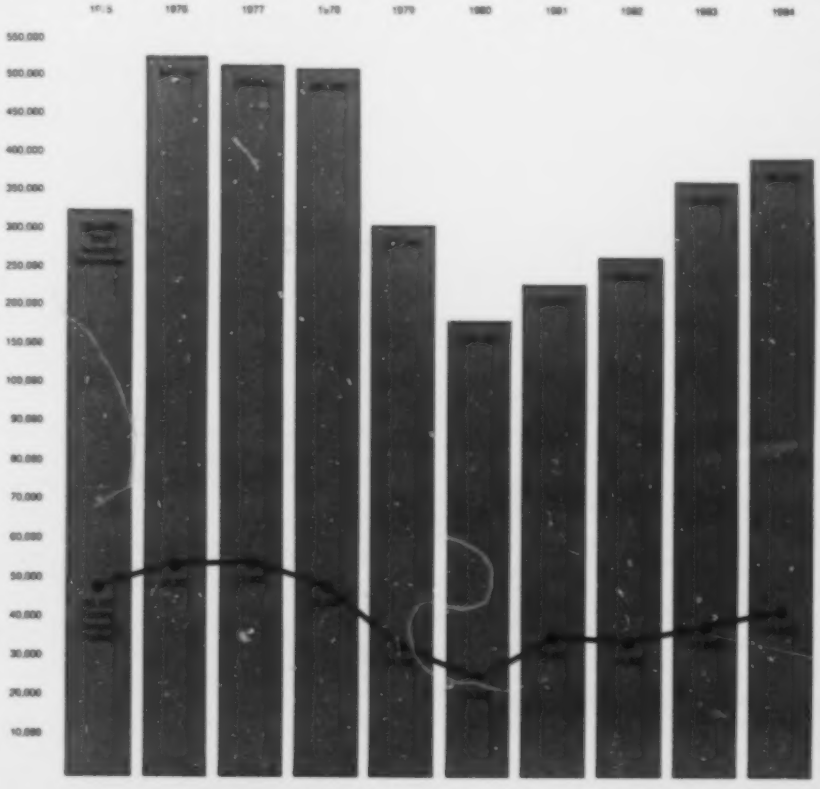
New Paris Industries also values its lift system. In fact, the Indiana-based company offers a lifetime lift-system warranty on all of its new Valor folding camping trailers.

Oftentimes inclement meteorologic conditions inspire appreciation for extra care in RV design and execution. For example, Bonair—which distributes in Canada, New England, the Midwest and West Virginia—constructs fully insulated polyurethane injected roofs that are one piece with no seam, and are rounded so water will drain off. Northstar's models also feature a light one-piece laminated roof. TravLite has gone hardtop this year, adding a two-sleeper top unit with 6.5 feet of headroom and 20 feet of storage. Sun-Lite is another company that has jumped on the one-piece-roof bandwagon, and has included a large roof vent as well.

Anyone who has had to replace an entire canvas, because of one little tear that quickly progressed from a small annoyance to a vent the size of the Great Rift Valley of Southwest Asia, can ap-

## COMPARATIVE SHIPMENT FIGURES 1975–1984

Folding Camping Trailers/Total Industry Shipments




*Data courtesy of Recreation Vehicle Industry Association*

## FOLDING CAMPING TRAILERS *continued*

preciate that Bonair has designed a sectional canvas, allowing replacement of only the damaged section.

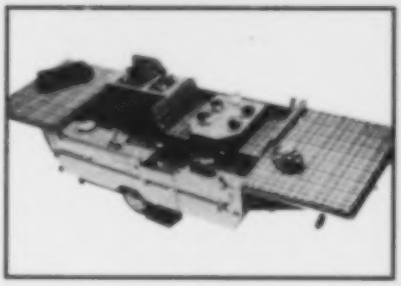
One of the most innovative items on the market is the expando room concept implemented on two models from Four Seasons. On these units, one entire sidewall pulls out with only 4-5 pounds pressure to provide 51 percent additional floor space. They are still lightweight and towable with compact vehicles; the hitch weight is a mere 73-150 pounds.

According to Four Seasons' President Bill Entrup, these two models have bathroom walls that extend floor-to-ceiling and a solid door. Both units have a hot water shower option that features a 26-gallon water supply. If the customer elects to purchase the shower/hot water heater option, he gets a 6-gallon quick-recovery hot water heater, plus a 3-gallon-per-minute demand water system and dual control hot/cold kitchen sink faucet—and the kitchen sink is a double basin. Depending on the model, these units can accommodate from three to eight people.

Another model, the Apache Royal features solid state walls made of ABS thermoplastic panels. An interior folding wall separates the dining/living area from a bathroom, dressing room and a 32-inch square shower.

*Esterel Supermatic*

*Coleman*



*Siarcraft*

*Apache Ramada*

An entire series of Fold-A-Wall units has been added to Palomino's consumer-ready lineup. In addition, Palomino now offers a tent fabric they call Vinylution. It is said to combine "the strength and durability of vinyl with the breathability of Evolution-3 fabric."

While other companies are into the more obvious additions and revisions, Shasta has turned its attention to detail. One such item is its new pullout galley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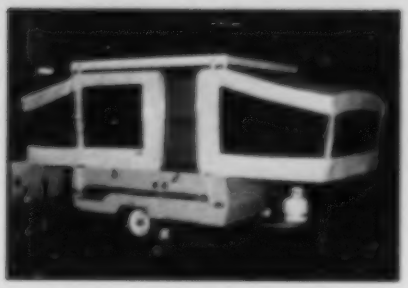

*Texson*

*Coachmen*

*Bonair BA-1000*

*Time Out*

*TravLite*

*Kompact Kamp Mini-Mate*

drawer with a travel lock. Anybody who has ever traveled with a recalcitrant drawer that spills its insides at every corner knows why such detail can be important to an RV owner.

The Cherokee from Texson is middleweight and midpriced for the medium-size family. It sleeps five; so, it will accommodate the average American family's 2.2 children.

Sun-Lite reports good public response to its new Fire Bird V folding camping trailer that allows cooking both inside and outside the unit, and sports two bed wings. The Firebird V joins the Sun Bird II and the Red Bird in Sun-Lite's lineup of units designed for smaller cars. Sun-Lite also offers a folding truck camper with models that fit both the minitrucks and the ½-ton trucks. Another new venture for Sun-Lite is its im-

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## FOLDING CAMPING TRAILERS *continued*

port handling and sole distribution of the Rapido Caravan, a French-built hardwall folding camping trailer.

Viking's newest models sport several buyer-attracting new features including a metal underbelly, a mirror in the upper door, radius-cornered cabinetry, 4-inch cushions, a 9-amp converter, 12-gallon freshwater capacity, a three-burner range and a porch lamp. It also has laminated bunks, independent suspension, separate amber turn-signal wiring and Krystal Kote metal. The Viking Spirit camping trailers feature Evolution-3 tenting, extra-wide-track spring axle, Krystal Kote side metal, a three-burner range (except the 1300), a 6-amp converter, 9-gallon freshwater capacity and a storage drawer in the galley area.

Rockwood's innovations include no-scrub vinyl flooring, a deluxe folding storm and screen door, and all-new stain-resistant Herculon upholstery.

While not every manufacturer has an earth-shattering new presentation, several have opted to add new models to their lines. Among them is Starcraft, with three new models. Both its Starlite and All Star series sport side dinette floorplans, and the 19-foot Starlite has


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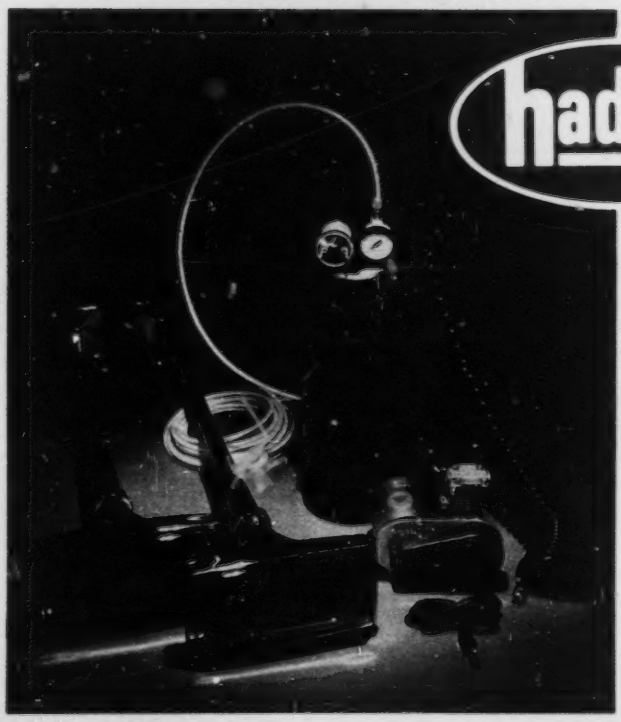

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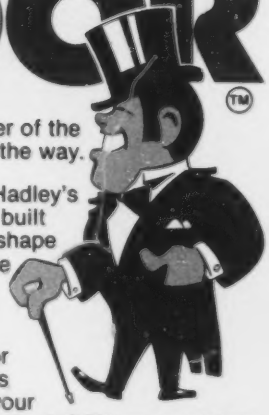

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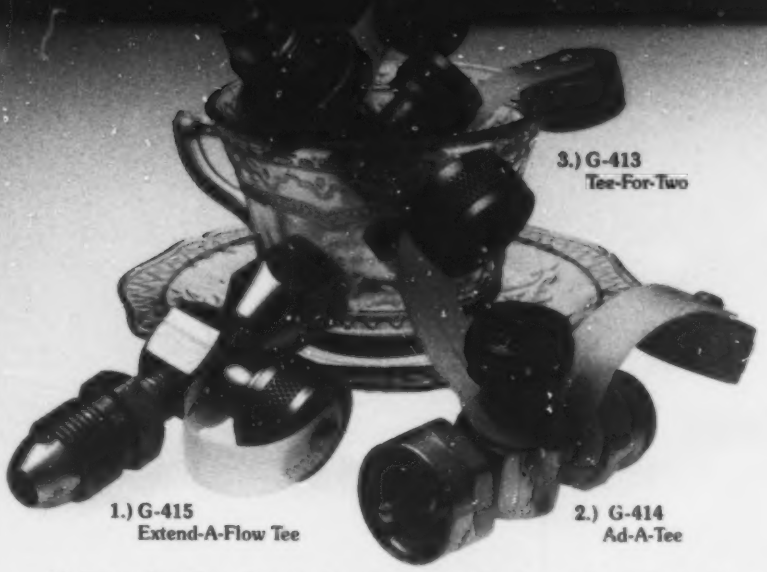

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## FOLDING CAMPING TRAILERS *continued*

### Coleman Adds New Line

*Coleman Plantation Tara*

Coleman has made big news in the folding camping trailer industry with its brand new Plantation series. In fact, to draw attention to the important differences this series presents, Coleman likes to refer to the new line as "folding trailers" rather than folding camping trailers. The major thrust of the company's new approach to this market is the provision of a luxury-level line that can be towed behind midsize cars.

To accomplish this, Coleman began with the already innovative solid-wall format and added its own special touches. The Tara model, for example, has a step-down galley. An interior folding wall creates a master suite with queen-size bed and tub/shower/potty compartment. The Savannah has separate tub/shower room also, but the floorplan makes it more like a regular bath than a master suite arrangement. The Savannah will sleep six—as opposed to Tara's sleeping quarters for seven. Both models have folding interior hard walls—imparting unprecedented privacy in this type of unit.

The Plantation series' road height is 54 inches. The added height allows a stationary galley. Only the folding walls for the bathroom require setup. Interior setup height is a full 79 inches, but Coleman says the curb weight still passes well under the 2000-pound mark at 1865 pounds. The Plantation series includes interior storage space, color-coordinated high-gloss enameled sink, oven, gas furnace, wardrobe/love seat, refrigerator and decorator-coordinated cotton/polyester draperies with undercurtains in this new line.

52-inch end mattresses. Freedom's new 300 and 400 lightweight models feature molded aerodynamics and double beds 6 feet 8 inches long. Jayco has added two deluxe models and a new 1208 eight-sleeper has been added to the economy "J" Series line.

As most manufacturers are, those who

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## FOLDING CAMPING TRAILERS *continued*

make folding camping trailers are quite proud of their wares—so much so that they tout their virtues whether they are new or not. TravLites feature heavy-duty steel frames, for example, and one-piece molded high-density polyethylene bodies. Starcraft models have independent suspension as a standard feature on all Starlite Series models. A deluxe option group offers a carryout stove, decorator cabinetry and designer drapes.

While a portable toilet is standard on Apache's five new models, an optional flush toilet is offered with 9½-gallon holding capacity. A laundry hamper is provided beside the shower, and the galley features a permanently mounted range hood with light and power exhaust. An overhead cupboard is next to the hood.

Bonair says its roof can carry an equally spread 600-pound load on its roof. The sectionalized aluminum exterior is said to facilitate repairs. The moldings are all baked enamel-painted aluminum. Marine-type plywood comprises the flooring. According to Côté, no chipboard is used in Bonair's units, just plywood.

Freedom—making a good showing in its first year in the industry—is proud that it offers a full range of lighting, water systems, LP-gas cooking features, 12-inch wheels and independent trailing arm suspension. The tent is offered in a variety of colors for the color-conscious consumer.

Coleman has upgraded its economy Pioneer line to now include a power converter, step light, drapes and a waist-level crank system. The deluxe Americana line now boasts plush fabrics and living decor. Last year's successful side dinette has been included in the Pioneer line's Chesapeake. Some Coleman units feature showers and air conditioning.

Recently, Coleman introduced a new line of high-sided, larger tent trailers called the Plantation series. Some models feature folding hard interior walls and "master bedrooms." One version offers a step-down galley. *(See page 68.)*

Rockwood has made concerted efforts to eliminate problems and implement new features. Its units have wide-track axles, a curved roof, vacuum-formed aerodynamically designed construction, a one-piece floor, a high-rise kitchen counter, a fingertip slide-out system for bunks, self-storing bunk supports, and an all-new gear and chain drive for the lifter system.

Jayco gives special attention to storage capacity that includes overhead cabinets, a wardrobe, pullout pantry and a vanity with lots of drawer space in many models.

Esterel is another manufacturer that combines towability and sturdiness with

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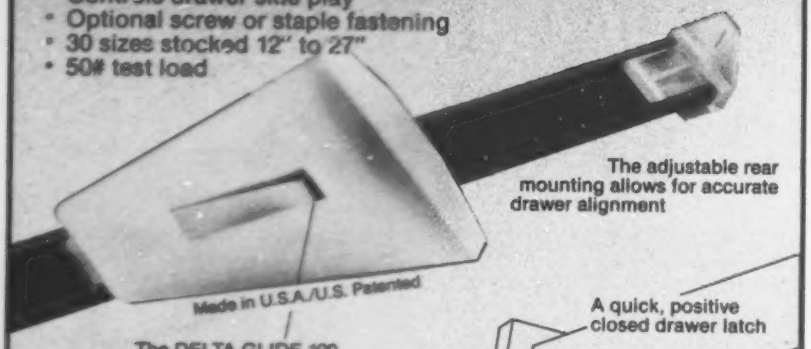


The DELTA GLIDE 100 offers a positive outstop mechanism to eliminate accidental drawer fall-out.

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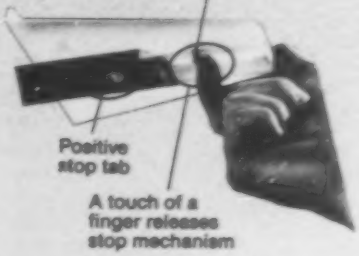


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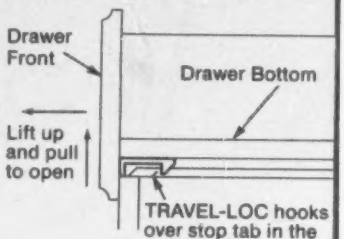


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## FOLDING CAMPING TRAILERS *continued*

its folded hard walls of Styrofoam sandwiched between interior paneling and exterior fiberglass or metal. Its undercarriage and belly pan are undercoated, and even the windows are double-insulated against immoderate weather.

Newly styled graphics on Shasta's scratch- and dent-resistant aluminum skins may be the first thing you notice. Inside, though, under the Evolution-3 or 10.10-ounce canvas tent are 3-inch-thick high-density mattresses and cushions. Maintenance is facilitated by the use of vinyl floor covering and stain-resistant fabrics. All models sleep six people except the 1300 model, which sleeps four.

Coachmen's models are available in lengths ranging from 13 to 18.5 feet. Canvas tenting has been replaced by Evolution-3 fabric. New metallic graphics top the unit that rides on automotive-style suspension. The flip-up galley has a new galley drawer cover. Options range from a portable toilet to a boat rack or electric brakes.

The Texson Cherokee features independent wheel suspension, 12-inch automotive tires with five-lug-bolt pattern, all-vinyl canvas, 4-inch-thick cushions and a pop-up kitchen. Tinted vinyl, zippered windows are designed for light filtration with easy viewing.

A new company to watch on the folding camping trailer horizon is Landmark, which is in the process of building its first prototype. *(For more on Landmark, see "Industry News" on page 99.)*

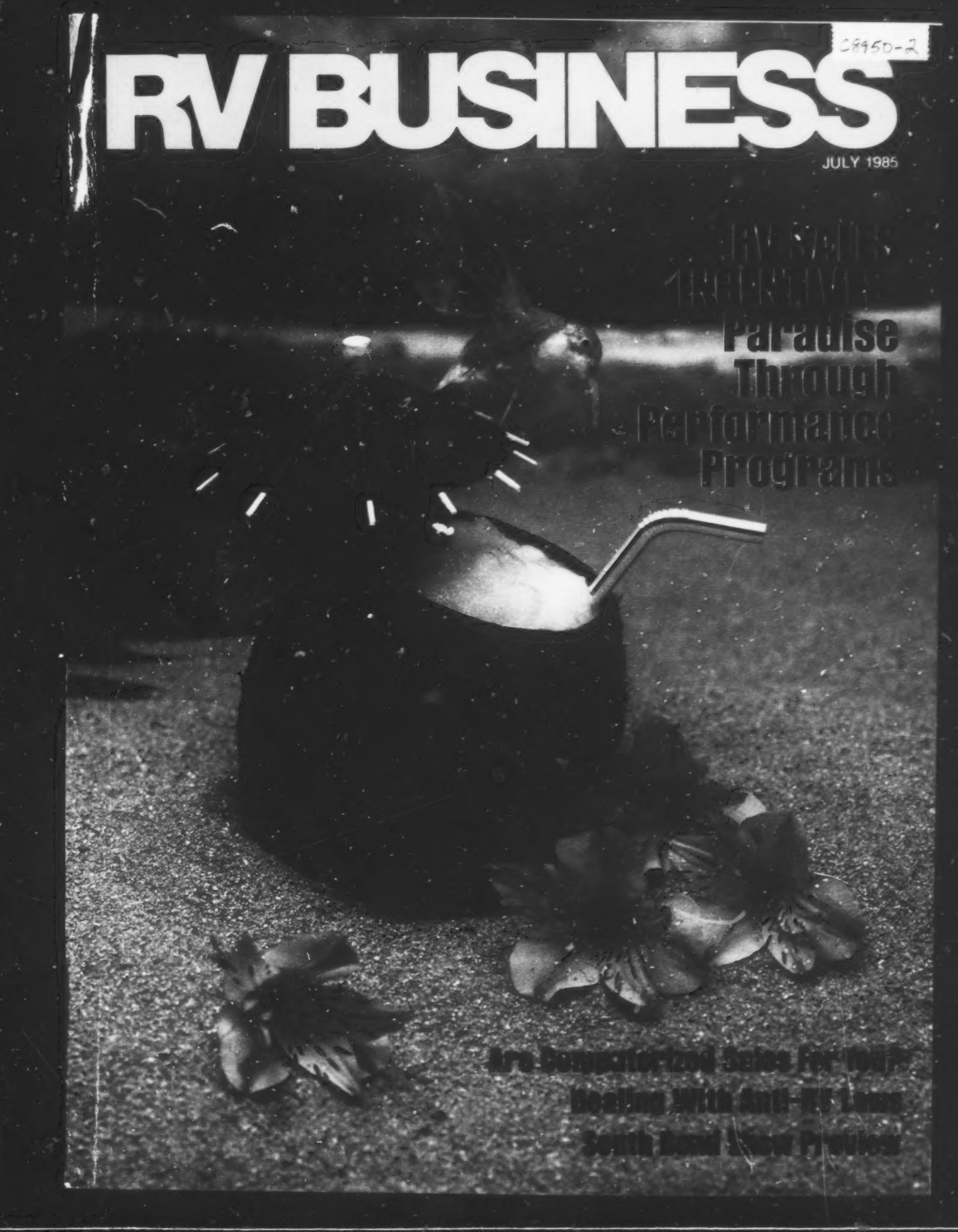
There you have it: price, towability and amenities—the big appeal. "A guy came in here and sold his '84 Class A and bought one of our folding trailers," reports one manufacturer. It's different strokes for different folks; fortunately, the folding camping trailer is the stroke that appeals to a significant segment of the buying public.

All that the public has to know now when they arrive at the dealership in a buying frame of mind is what to call the things. Our query to the manufacturers turned up these statistics: 33 percent prefer "folding camping trailer." Starcraft's Cuzzocrea points out, "It describes what it is." He also voted for "fold-down camping trailer" for the same reason; 20 percent of the manufacturers surveyed favored that term. "Camping trailer" enjoyed the same percentage of votes. "Fold-down trailers" received a meager 13 percent of the votes, while "folding camper" brought up the rear with a mere 6 percent of the voters' favor. Eight percent did not indicate a preference. Interestingly, however, a good number of the respondents across the board who voted for these more formal titles, in the next breath referred to their units as "fold-downs." A rose by any other name. . . . Δ

CR95D-2

# RV BUSINESS

JULY 1985



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RV BUSINESS

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## FEATURES

**PERFORMANCE PROGRAMS** 44
*Mark S. Lapidus*
Their return on investment is well worthwhile, say business experts.

**RV INDUSTRY INCENTIVES** 58
*Susan R. O'Hara*
While particular incentive devices vary, the vote is unanimous: Incentives work.

**COMPUTER SALES NETWORKS** 72
*Bob Longsdorf*
Computers are here; is sales networking for you?

**QUALITY** 84
*Bob Longsdorf*
Quality crusader Philip Crosby talks with RVB in this final series article.

**GUESTVIEWS ON U-HAUL** 94
*Newt Kindlund, Gregory Hughes*
U-Haul and a vocal critic square off.

**DEALERS AND LEGISLATION** 96
*Ann Park*
Should dealers get involved? If so, how much is enough; how much is too much?

**RV ALLIANCE** 107
*Yvonne Vallett*
This RV tech school is working; what significance does that have for the industry?

**SERVICEABILITY SELLS** 113
*Bob Emprimo*
RVs can and should be made easier to service.

**AD OF THE MONTH** 118
*Ben Sussman*
Gamble on a sure thing.

**51ST ANNUAL MIDWEST SHOW** 139
Floorplans, exhibitor listings, calendar of events for the South Bend event.

## DEPARTMENTS

**EDITORIAL** 5
*Michael Schreide*

**LETTERS** 10

**MAGARY** 14
*Don Magary*

**MAXWELL** 19
*Gaylord Maxwell*

**OERTLE** 24
*V. Lee Oertle*

**FISCALINE** 31
*John Thompson*

**PERSPECTIVE** 32
*Gaylord Maxwell*

**ASSOCIATIONS** 33
*Olga Markowitz*

**SHIPMENTS** 34

**RV PEOPLE** 40

**INDUSTRY NEWS** 123
*Olga Markowitz*

**PROFITMAKERS** 148

**CALENDAR** 152

**BACK PAGE** 154
*Sheryl Davis*

**ON THE COVER:** What makes Sam Salesman run? Experienced businesspeople from many industries, including the RV industry, believe incentives, such as travel to an exotic paradise, motivate personnel to perform better. Find out why, who does what and how to implement performance incentive programs, beginning on page 44. Photo: Kenna Love.

# Perspective

An analysis of RVB's monthly survey of its Dealer Advisory Board Members

GAYLORD MAXWELL

| | NEW | | | | | | USED | | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | FOR MONTH | | | YEAR-TO-DATE | | | FOR MONTH | | | YEAR-TO-DATE | | |
| | APRIL '85 | APRIL '84 | % CHANGE | 1985 | 1984 | % CHANGE | APRIL '85 | APRIL '84 | % CHANGE | 1985 | 1984 | % CHANGE |
| MOTORHOMES | 136 | 125 | + 9% | 451 | 456 | – 1 | 91 | 99 | – 8% | 360 | 387 | – 7 |
| TRAVEL TRAILERS | 129 | 100 | +29% | 359 | 368 | – 2 | 87 | 109 | –20% | 280 | 368 | + 3 |
| TRUCK CAMPERS | 24 | 19 | +26% | 59 | 64 | – 8 | 16 | 19 | –16% | 48 | 65 | –26 |
| CAMPING TRAILERS | 142 | 175 | –19% | 460 | 559 | –18 | 49 | 34 | +44% | 129 | 98 | +32 |
| FIFTH-WHEELS | 34 | 44 | –23% | 129 | 149 | –13 | 10 | 13 | –30% | 34 | 38 | –11 |

| | FOR MONTH | | | YEAR-TO-DATE | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | APRIL '85 | APRIL '84 | % CHANGE | 1985 | 1984 | % CHANGE |
| SALES VOLUME | $10,471,236 | $9,443,912 | +11% | $34,854,408 | $34,861,764 | < 1 |
| TOTAL UNIT SALES | 716 | 737 | – 3% | 2,309 | 2,555 | –10 |
| NEW UNIT SALES | 463 | 463 | 0% | 1,458 | 1,599 | – 9 |
| USED UNIT SALES | 253 | 274 | – 8% | 851 | 956 | –11 |

Despite the fact that most of them claim to be struggling, RV dealers did not fare too badly in April. RVB's Dealer Advisory Board (DAB) reports that the total number of new units sold during the month equaled that of April 1984. Dollars taken in during the month actually exceeded the figure for the previous year.

That is not the whole picture, however. The fact is that, in the tabulations for this report, the number of minuses far exceeds the number of plusses. For the month, two new-unit categories were down and four of the five RV types dropped from the previous April in used sales. Year-to-date, all types of new units are down.

Profit ratings are generally lower, too. Although few DAB members rated profits poor, there were equally few excellent ratings; it was a fair to good month. Even used profits were off the mark.

It is no gravy train in the RV business at this time. Unlike the two crises in the past, however, dealers are not starving; neither are they getting fat. But there are no indications that big changes are expected in the near future.

### MOTORHOMES

Sales of new units held their own during the month of April. The final DAB figures show '84 and '85 exactly the same. Used sales were off a bit; year-to-date, sales are very slightly down.

Some of the larger motorhome specialists say it is getting tougher by the day to make good sales. The problem, they say, is very strong competition. On the other hand, some of the board members who do not specialize in motorized are doing exceptionally well compared to last year. Profits were generally rated fair to good.

### TRAVEL TRAILERS

For the second month in a row, this category has been on the plus side in new-unit sales. Although some DAB members who normally have strong sales at this time of the year are complaining, a few are doing exceptionally well. No one has an explanation.

Profit ratings varied a great deal for April, ranging all the way from poor to excellent; however, good received the most votes.

### TRUCK CAMPERS

The numbers are not large, but a few dealers on the DAB consistently pull in sales of this RV type. The general complaint is that there just is not enough business for dealers to give much attention to campers. Perhaps it is just as well that not too many dealers try. Profits were rated good for the month.

### CAMPING TRAILERS

The downturn for this type did not change in April. The 19 percent drop for the month is consistent with the year-to-date figure. Most of the camping trailer specialists are finding the pickings leaner this year. There is no accounting for that condition.

Sales of used camping trailers are unusually strong for some unexplainable reason. Perhaps it is due to the fact that new units, although inexpensive in comparison with other RV types, represent a substantial investment that makes used prices very attractive.

Profits were rated fair to good.

### FIFTH-WHEELS

Both new and used sales were down for the month. Year-to-date, it is the same. Some of the multi-type dealers who normally sell a couple of units each month blanked in April; some of those dealers who get big numbers did not do well. No one has an explanation for the drop.

Profits were rated from fair to good. Δ

*Perspective is a compilation of data provided by RVB's Dealer Advisory Board (DAB), a group comprised of 23 dealers representing a cross-section of the U.S. Dealer body. This report is an attempt to reflect the current retail sales picture; it does not purport to indicate RV production or factory sales to dealers.*

# RVIA, APRIL

The marketing committee of the Recreation Vehicle Industry Association has announced that the total number of recreational vehicles shipped from manufacturers' plants during April 1985 was 38,600 units, down 12.3% from April 1984.

The shipment figures released by the association are contained in a report compiled for the membership by RVIA's marketing committee under the chairmanship of Allen Yodes Jr. of Jayco Incorporated, Middlebury, Indiana.

| RV shipments were as follows in April 1985 | | April 1984 | Percent Change | Cumulative 1985 | Cumulative 1984 | Percent Change |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| TRAVEL TRAILERS | 8,500 | 9,500 | – 10.5% | 25,000 | 31,100 | – 19.6% |
| FIFTH-WHEELS | 2,300 | 2,500 | – 8.0% | 7,300 | 7,500 | – 2.7% |
| TRUCK CAMPERS | 900 | 900 | 0 | 2,500 | 3,000 | – 16.7% |
| MULTI-USE VEHICLES | 15,500 | 17,100 | – 9.4% | 57,300 | 57,500 | – 0.3% |
| TYPE A: MOTOR-HOMES | 3,600 | 4,500 | – 20.0% | 13,300 | 15,800 | – 15.8% |
| TYPE B: VAN CAMPERS | 600 | 900 | – 33.3% | 2,100 | 2,700 | – 22.2% |
| TYPE C: MINI MOTOR-HOMES | 3,200 | 4,000 | – 20.0% | 11,200 | 14,300 | – 21.7% |
| FOLDING CAMPING TRAILERS | 4,001 | 4,600 | – 13.0% | 14,500 | 15,200 | – 4.6% |
| TOTALS | 38,600 | 44,000 | – 12.3% | 133,200 | 147,100 | – 9.5% |

# WDA QUARTERLY SALES FIGURES

*RV Business* publishes a quarterly report of sales statistics from the Warehouse Distributors Association (WDA). The chart shown here is based upon a representative sampling of WDA members, as compiled in the first quarter of 1985. While these statistics are not intended to be fully indicative of the sales volume among distributors in the RV and MH industries, they are presented here as an insight into the supplier/distributor industry.

**SALES VOLUME**

| | FIRST-QUARTER SALES VOLUME | |
|---|---|---|
| | PERCENT CHANGE 1984 to 1985 | RANGE OF CHANGE |
| REGION 1 | 0.0% | +27.3% to – 17.1% |
| REGION 2 | +7.8% | +31.5% to – 9.2% |
| REGION 3 | – 5.2% | +10.6% to – 63.9% |
| REGION 4 | – 8.4% | +22.4% to – 36.7% |
| REGION 5 | +6.8% | +64.5% to – 30.0% |
| REGION 6 | – 6.5% | +78.9% to – 32.6% |

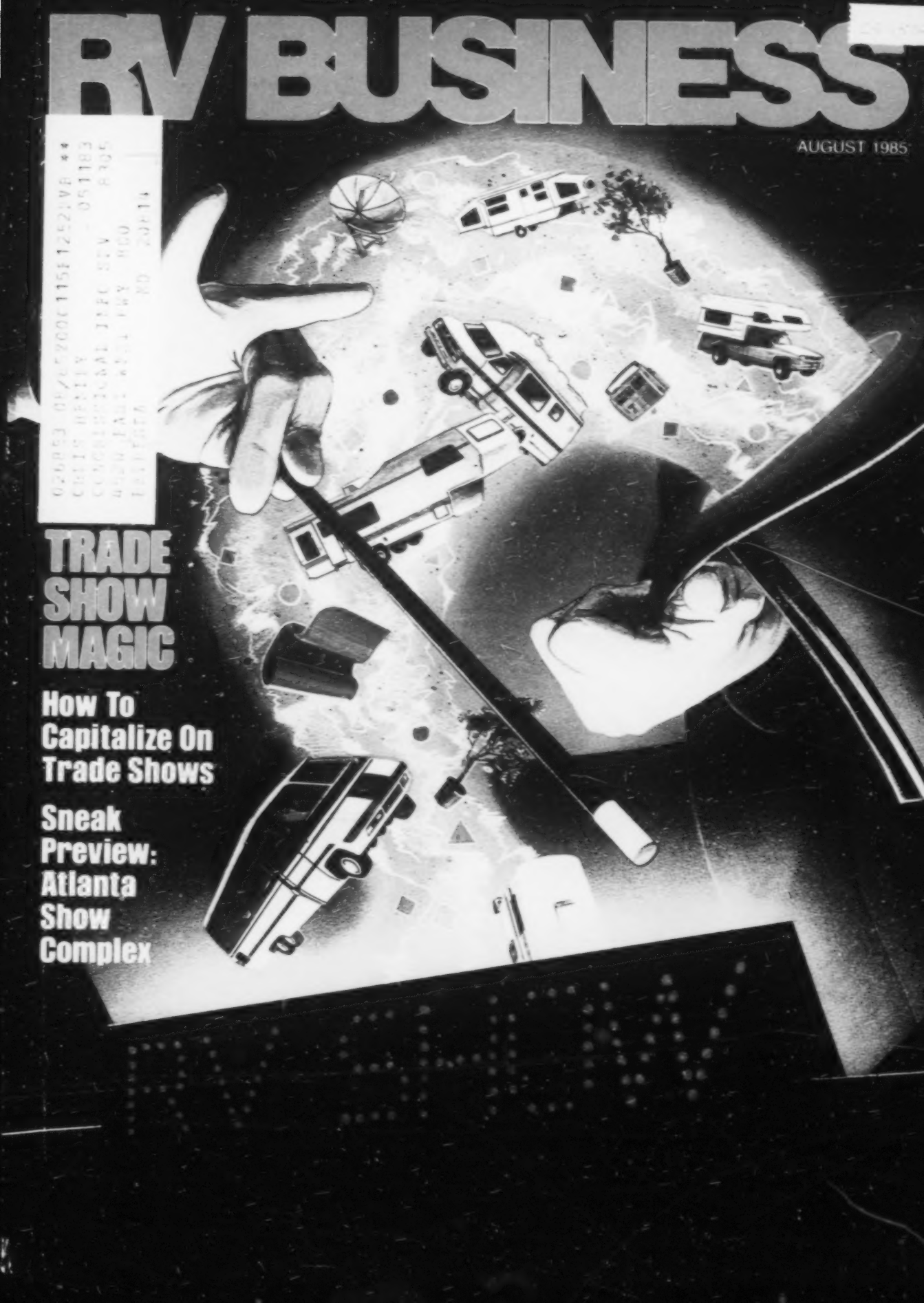
**Region 1:** Connecticut, Delaware, Maine, Maryland, Massachusetts, New Hampshire, New Jersey, New York, Pennsylvania, Rhode Island, Vermont, Virginia, West Virginia and Washington, D.C.; **Region 2:** Alabama, Florida, Georgia, Mississippi, North and South Carolina, and Tennessee; **Region 3:** Illinois, Indiana, Iowa, Kentucky, Michigan, Minnesota, Missouri, Nebraska, North and South Dakota, Ohio and Wisconsin; **Region 4:** Arkansas, Colorado, Kansas, Louisiana, Oklahoma, New Mexico and Texas; **Region 5:** Alaska, Arizona, California, Hawaii, Idaho, Montana, Nevada, Oregon, Utah, Washington and Wyoming; **Region 6:** Canada.



Moments. Circle 70 on Reader Service Card

# RV BUSINESS

AUGUST 1985



## TRADE SHOW MAGIC

How To Capitalize On Trade Shows

Sneak Preview: Atlanta Show Complex

# CONTENTS


**TRADE-SHOW SELLING**
*Don Magary*

Success at a show doesn't have to be a gamble. Confidence is a result of months of hard work and thoughtful planning.

**FIFTY REASONS TO SHOW**

**THE ASSOCIATION-SPONSORED SHOW**
*Susan R. O'Hara*

"Since few associations report having ever lost money conducting a show, association-sponsored RV shows seem a safe bet...."

**THE ATLANTA SHOW**
*John Thompson*

A cosmopolitan setting, 639,000 square feet of expansive floor space and a few pleasant surprises make this an interesting alternative to Louisville.

**CHASSIS AGE VS. MODEL AGE**
*Bob Longsdorf*

"... As long as the basic problem remains, the potential for trouble—for abuses by unscrupulous dealers——will be there."

**LOOK SHARP, BE SHARP**
*Bob Honke*

For improved sales, improve appearances. First, change your own habits, but it's not easy to see one's own dirt.

**AD OF THE MONTH**
*Ben Sussman*

Marshall Brass—their cup overfloweth with sales inquiries.

**EDITORIAL**
*Michael Schneider*

**LETTERS**

**MAGARY**
*Don Magary*

**MAXWELL**
*Gaylord Maxwell*

**OERTLE**
*V. Lee Oertle*

**WILMATH**
*Cliff Wilmath*

**FISCALINE**
*John Thompson*

**PERSPECTIVE**
*Gaylord Maxwell*

**ASSOCIATIONS**
*Olga Markowitz*

**SHIPMENTS**

**RV PEOPLE: MEET THE PIONEERS**
*Alice Robison Dauro*

**INDUSTRY NEWS**
*Olga Markowitz*

**PROFITMAKERS**

**CALENDAR**

**BACK PAGE**
*Sheryl Davis*


There is more than a little magic involved in materializing a trade show. The success of these events is no illusion. Read how to stage a show—and how to get the most out of it—beginning on page 46. And enjoy a sneak preview of the industry's newest show location on pages 70-71. Cover illustration: David Clemons.

# Perspective

An analysis of RVB's monthly survey of its Dealer Advisory Board Members

GAYLORD MAXWELL

| | NEW | | | | | | USED | | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | FOR MONTH | | | YEAR-TO-DATE | | | FOR MONTH | | | YEAR-TO-DATE | | |
| | MAY '85 | MAY '84 | % CHANGE | 1985 | 1984 | % CHANGE | MAY '85 | MAY '84 | % CHANGE | 1985 | 1984 | % CHANGE |
| MOTORHOMES | 133 | 149 | –10% | 594 | 607 | – 2% | 93 | 107 | –13% | 452 | 499 | – 9% |
| TRAVEL TRAILERS | 116 | 145 | +20% | 471 | 515 | – 9% | 109 | 95 | +15% | 390 | 466 | –16% |
| TRUCK CAMPERS | 30 | 26 | +15% | 89 | 90 | – 1% | 23 | 18 | +28% | 75 | 108 | –31% |
| CAMPING TRAILERS | 134 | 160 | –16% | 594 | 719 | –17% | 33 | 37 | –11% | 161 | 132 | +22% |
| FIFTH-WHEELS | 31 | 37 | –16% | 142 | 186 | –24% | 9 | 7 | +29% | 46 | 46 | same |

| | FOR MONTH | | | YEAR-TO-DATE | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | MAY '85 | MAY '84 | % CHANGE | 1985 | 1984 | % CHANGE |
| SALES VOLUME | $10,238,633 | $10,895,021 | – 6% | $45,273,040 | $45,706,760 | – 1% |
| TOTAL UNIT SALES | 711 | 781 | – 9% | 3,014 | 3,368 | –11% |
| NEW UNIT SALES | 444 | 517 | –14% | 1,819 | 2,117 | –11% |
| USED UNIT SALES | 267 | 264 | + 1% | 1,124 | 1,251 | –10% |

If there were expectations of a pre-summer buying spree, they have been proven hollow. Dealers are struggling to keep the ink black.

The marketplace isn't a shambles by any means, but sales are running behind those of '84. Dollar volume is close for the two years, but new-unit sales are significantly off. Used sales are not much better.

Numbers alone don't tell the entire story. According to RVB's Dealer Advisory Board (DAB) members, it is a struggle to get sales. Traffic is down and competition is unusually stiff; consequently, grosses are lower. Some dealers report that, although they are maintaining the same dollar volume, they aren't making any money.

Things aren't all bad, however. Indeed, several DAB members are having a banner year. There is no particular rhyme or reason for success or failure in terms of geography; no area is 100 percent up or down. No particular RV type is in special demand or lacking in demand. The dealership size does not seem to be the key to success or failure. In short, it is a mixed bag.

Many things are blamed for the sluggish RV market. Most dealers believe the problem is primarily economic. People simply do not have the money to pay for expensive RVs. The uncertainty of the future keeps many people from signing long-term notes. Job security does not mean what it did a couple of decades ago—especially for blue-collar workers.

## MOTORHOMES

Both new and used motorhome sales dropped in May, but things are not too bad for the year-to-date. Most of the larger DAB dealers managed to stay close to last year's figures, but nearly all complain of traffic shortages and poor grosses.

Surprisingly, used units are down more than new. For several years, used motorhomes have moved quickly at high prices. They have definitely slowed down and prices have weakened. Only one DAB dealer rated profits on motorhomes excellent; most said they were fair or good.

## TRAVEL TRAILERS

This category took it on the chin in May—a drop of 20 percent in new-unit sales. Used units aren't doing as well as new ones. Trailer specialists are perplexed about the public's seeming lack of interest in pull-type RVs.

There is a lot of product shuffling in the marketplace as dealers readjust their inventories. Profits were generally rated fair to good, but there were more poor marks than usual.

## TRUCK CAMPERS

Our DAB camper specialist had a very good month, as did other multitype dealers who has a good stock of campers. This is the only category this month that has plusses in both new and used sales for the month of May. Year-to-date, the 1 percent drop in sales of new units is the lowest for any category. Sales were rated excellent by the specialist and poor by another dealer.

## CAMPING TRAILERS

The drop in May is consistent with the year-to-date drop in new-unit sales. This RV type, which is purchased primarily by blue-collar families, just is not as much in demand this year as it was last year. Uncertainty about the economic picture probably accounts for much of the drop. Also, many families have such small cars that they can't easily tow the folding camping trailers, which can weigh up to a ton when loaded.

Camping trailer grosses have dropped significantly. In past years they have usually been the leader in profit percentages, but that has changed. Only one DAB dealer rated profits excellent in May; most rated them fair or good.

## FIFTH-WHEELS

In terms of percentages, this type is the leading loser for the year-to-date with a drop of 24 percent. Both DAB dealers who specialize in fivers are significantly down in sales. They don't know why. Profits, however, were rated good. Δ

*Perspective is a compilation of data provided by RVB's Dealer Advisory Board (DAB), a group comprised of 23 dealers representing a cross-section of the U.S. Dealer body. This report is an attempt to reflect the current retail sales picture; it does not purport to indicate RV production or factory sales to dealers.*

# RVIA, MAY

The marketing committee of the Recreation Vehicle Industry Association has announced that the total number of recreational vehicles shipped from manufacturers' plants during May 1985 was 36,400 units, down 9.0% from May 1984.

The shipment figures released by the association are contained in a report compiled for the membership by RVIA's marketing committee under the chairmanship of Allen Yoder Jr. of Jayco Incorporated, Middlebury, Indiana.

| RV shipments were as follows in May 1985 | | May 1984 | Percent Change | Cumulative 1985 | Cumulative 1984 | Percent Change |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| TRAVEL TRAILERS | 6,300 | 7,300 | – 13.7% | 31,300 | 38,400 | – 18.5% |
| FIFTH-WHEELS | 1,900 | 1,800 | + 5.6% | 9,200 | 9,300 | – 1.1% |
| TRUCK CAMPERS | 900 | 900 | 0 | 3,400 | 3,900 | – 12.8% |
| MULTI-USE VEHICLES | 15,900 | 17,600 | – 9.7% | 73,200 | 75,100 | – 2.5% |
| TYPE A: MOTOR-HOMES | 3,400 | 3,900 | – 12.8% | 16,700 | 19,700 | – 15.2% |
| TYPE B: VAN CAMPERS | 1,000 | 800 | + 25.0% | 3,100 | 3,500 | – 11.4% |
| TYPE C: MINI MOTOR-HOMES | 3,600 | 3,500 | + 2.9% | 14,800 | 17,800 | – 16.9% |
| FOLDING CAMPING TRAILERS | 3,400 | 4,200 | – 19.0% | 17,900 | 19,400 | – 7.7% |
| TOTALS | 36,400 | 40,000 | – 9.0% | 169,600 | 187,100 | – 9.4% |

# RV BUSINESS

SEPTEMBER 1985

## THE UPS, DOWNS & GO-AROUNDS OF THE VAN MARKET

**Are Factory Stores Really Bad?**

**Complete Details:**
**PRVCA Expo '86, RVDA '85 Convention**

Jayco

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I'm interested in Jayco ☐ Fold-downs ☐ Travel Trailers ☐ Mini Motorhomes ☐ Fifth Wheels ☐ Truck Campers

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P.O. Box 460
Middlebury, IN 46540

RVB0985

# CONTENTS

A TL ENTERPRISES PUBLICATION SEPTEMBER 1985/VOL. 36, NO.6

## FEATURES

34 **VAN INDUSTRY '86**
*Ellis Trantor*
In this merry-go-round market, is it time to grab the brass ring?

38 **MINIVANS**
These newcomers are poised to battle for market share.

52 **AZEVEDO**
*Bob Azevedo*
RVDA's president expresses his views on RVDA and the industry.

54 **TOW VEHICLE MODIFICATIONS**
*Bob Honke*
At best, supporting or suggesting alterations is risky business.

57 **DIRECT MAIL = DIRECTED PROFITS**
*Bess Ritter May*
Learn why and how to produce a profitable direct-mail campaign.

71 **THE IMPACT OF FACTORY STORES**
*Gaylord Maxwell*
Are they really dangerous to dealers, or just misunderstood?

79 **AD OF THE MONTH**
*Ben Sussman*
Blue Bird goes out on a limb.

## DEPARTMENTS

5 **EDITORIAL**
*Michael Schneider*

6 **LETTERS**

8 **MAGARY**
*Don Magary*

10 **MAXWELL**
*Gaylord Maxwell*

14 **OERTLE**
*V. Lee Oertle*

25 **FiscaLine**
*John Thompson*

26 **PERSPECTIVE**
*Gaylord Maxwell*

27 **ASSOCIATIONS**
*Olga Markowitz*

28 **SHIPMENTS**

30 **RV PEOPLE**

83 **INDUSTRY NEWS**
*Olga Markowitz*

96 **PRVCA RV EXPO'86**

98 **RVDA '85 CONVENTION**

100 **PROFITMAKERS**

104 **CALENDAR**

106 **BACK PAGE**
*Sheryl Davis*

## ON THE COVER

**ON THE COVER:** Historically, the van industry has had more than its share of ups, downs and go-arounds on its carousel ride through the marketplace. Our cover story (see page 34) details today's more composed van industry, and discusses the current and anticipated impact of the Big Three minivans (pages 38 and 44). Photo: Hal Hunt.

# Perspective

An analysis of RVB's monthly survey of its Dealer Advisory Board Members

GAYLORD MAXWELL

| | NEW | | | | | | USED | | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | FOR MONTH | | | YEAR-TO-DATE | | | FOR MONTH | | | YEAR-TO-DATE | | |
| | JUNE '85 | JUNE '84 | % CHANGE | 1985 | 1984 | % CHANGE | JUNE '85 | JUNE '84 | % CHANGE | 1985 | 1984 | % CHANGE |
| MOTORHOMES | 133 | 132 | + 1% | 732 | 737 | − 1% | 89 | 109 | −18% | 540 | 605 | −11% |
| TRAVEL TRAILERS | 128 | 106 | +21% | 609 | 625 | − 3% | 97 | 108 | −10% | 487 | 571 | −15% |
| TRUCK CAMPERS | 19 | 21 | −10% | 108 | 111 | − 3% | 11 | 17 | −35% | 86 | 126 | −32% |
| CAMPING TRAILERS | 245 | 194 | +26% | 955 | 1096 | −13% | 53 | 50 | + 6% | 216 | 181 | +19% |
| FIFTH-WHEELS | 35 | 39 | −10% | 177 | 225 | −24% | 12 | 11 | + 9% | 58 | 56 | + 4% |

| | FOR MONTH | | | YEAR-TO-DATE | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | JUNE '85 | JUNE '84 | % CHANGE | 1985 | 1984 | % CHANGE |
| SALES VOLUME | $10,656,013 | $10,508,453 | + 1% | $56,213,052 | $56,773,179 | − 1% |
| TOTAL UNIT SALES | 822 | 787 | + 4% | 3,968 | 4,333 | − 8% |
| NEW UNIT SALES | 560 | 492 | +14% | 2,581 | 2,794 | − 8% |
| USED UNIT SALES | 262 | 295 | −11% | 1,387 | 1,539 | −10% |

There was a definite upswing in RV retail sales in June. For the first time in several months, both new unit sales and total dollars taken in exceeded those recorded in June of the previous year. Several members of the Dealer Advisory Board (DAB) reported the best month for this year. Some of the larger dealers on the board led in increases.

Some damper was put on the good news by the fact that profits were reported down. One dealer reported one category as being excellent in profits for the month; most indicated that profits were fair or good.

Used units didn't fare so well for the month or for the year-to-date. As a rule, the demand for used units is exceptionally strong in June as first-time buyers prepare for summer vacations. No one has an explanation for the drop this year. Although some of the numbers are quite low, it is significant that all five RV categories are down in used sales for the year-to-date.

## MOTORHOMES

By barely 1 percent, new motorhome sales for a month finally beat out the same month for the previous year. Year-to-date, the figures are about the same, also. It seems reasonably apparent that the dealers on the board have adjusted to the realities of the marketplace and are definitely holding their own at a time when that is not easy.

Large motorhome specialists and large multitype dealers generally had a good month. Smaller dealers tended to have a little more trouble.

After the enormous demand for used units during the past few years, it is very surprising to see that sales have fallen off. In some areas, surpluses are reported. Gross profits for both new and used were rated fair to good.

## TRAVEL TRAILERS

For the second month in a row, this category has shown improvement over the previous year. After languishing considerably behind the previous year, sales are almost equal now.

As in the case of motorhomes, used sales are not so good. Many dealers are crying that their inventories are much too high. In some cases, they will gladly wholesale units.

Although overall sales were good for the month, not all dealers shared equally in the good times. In fact, some of the major trailer dealers on the board did very poorly; some have the key and some don't. Profits were rated fair to good.

## TRUCK CAMPERS

Only two DAB dealers reported new camper sales for the month; one is a specialist in that type. With so few unit sales, the drop of two caused a 10 percent dip on our charts. It is definitely not a boom time for this RV type.

Undoubtedly, part of the camper sales problem has to do with price (as with all RV types). The introduction of models that retail for well over $10,000 could be discouraging to a farmer with a pickup who is looking for an inexpensive travel or camping rig.

## CAMPING TRAILERS

After months of downturn, June "busted out all over" for the fold-downs. The healthy 26 percent increase narrowed the gap somewhat for the year-to-date figure, which had been noticeably wide compared to the previous June. Some DAB camping trailer specialists found the public's "hot button" during the month. The numbers aren't large, but even used units increased some from the previous year.

Profits were rated generally fair to good, but there were two poor marks—an indication, probably, that some dealers are willing to sacrifice profits in order to move units out.

## FIFTH-WHEELS

New-unit sales are still down for both the month and the year-to-date. DAB dealers who have strong fiver departments are finding leaner pickings than they have found in the past three years.

Used units are still moving reasonably well and profits are not bad—generally rated fair to good. Δ

*Perspective is a compilation of data provided by RVB's Dealer Advisory Board (DAB), a group comprised of 23 dealers representing a cross-section of the U.S. Dealer body. This report is an attempt to reflect the current retail sales picture; it does not purport to indicate RV production or factory sales to dealers.*

# RVIA, JUNE

Tne marketing committee of the Recreation Vehicle Industry Association has announced that the total number of recreational vehicles shipped from manufacturers' plants during June 1985 was 31,500 units, down 15.1% from June 1984.

The shipment figures released by the association are contained in a report compiled for the membership by RVIA's marketing committee under the chairmanship of Allen Yoder Jr. of Jayco Incorporated, Middlebury, Indiana.

| RV shipments were as follows in June 1985 | | June 1984 | Percent Change | Cumulative 1985 | Cumulative 1984 | Percent Change |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| TRAVEL TRAILERS | 5,600 | 6,400 | – 12.5% | 36,900 | 44,800 | – 17.6% |
| FIFTH-WHEELS | 1,900 | 1,700 | + 11.8% | 11,100 | 11,000 | + 0.9% |
| TRUCK CAMPERS | 700 | 900 | – 22.2% | 4,100 | 4,800 | – 14.6% |
| MULTI-USE VEHICLES | 15,300 | 17,900 | – 14.5% | 88,500 | 93,000 | – 4.8% |
| TYPE A: MOTOR-HOMES | 2,300 | 3,000 | – 23.3% | 19,000 | 22,700 | – 16.3% |
| TYPE B: VAN CAMPERS | 800 | 900 | – 11.1% | 3,900 | 4,400 | – 11.4% |
| TYPE C: MINI MOTOR-HOMES | 2,200 | 2,600 | – 15.4% | 17,000 | 20,400 | – 16.7% |
| FOLDING CAMPING TRAILERS | 2,700 | 3,700 | – 27.0% | 20,600 | 23,100 | – 10.8% |
| TOTALS | 31,500 | 37,100 | – 15.1% | 201,100 | 224,200 | – 10.3% |

CB150-A

# Complete Dodger Show Preview

RV BUSINESS

# CONTENTS


**PRODUCT LIABILITY**
*Bob Longsdorf*

Manufacturers, and sometimes dealers, are being forced to go to extreme lengths to ensure product safety. Here's how Congress proposes to solve the problem.

**ARBITRATION**
*Bob Longsdorf*

It may just be a matter of time before all consumer complaints go to arbitration and maybe, just maybe, short-circuit the courtroom.

**SELLING BENEFITS, NOT PRODUCT FEATURES**
*Stephen J. Frenzl*

The author's sales success formula: Always tell customers what's in it for them—benefits.

**HOURLY OR FLAT-RATE SERVICE CHARGES?**
*Michael C. Packard*

Making the proper decision can go a long way toward maximizing sales from the neglected, but all-important, service center.

**CORPORATION TAX TIPS**
*Richard Wetherington*

Here are some basic factors to consider in setting up your company, despite the changing tax scene.

32

**AD OF THE MONTH**
*Ben Sussman*

Skyline—its majestic skylines create customer trust and positive perceptions without urging reader calls to action.

**DODGER SHOW SECTION**

Floorplans, listings, calendar of events and more for the West's largest show—this year, without mobile homes.

**EDITORIAL**
*Michael Schneider*

**LETTERS**

**MAGARY**
*Don Magary*

**MAXWELL**
*Gaylord Maxwell*

**OERTLE**
*V. Lee Oertle*

**FISCALINE**
*John Thompson*

**PERSPECTIVE**
*Gaylord Maxwell*

**ASSOCIATIONS**
*Olga Markowitz*

**SHIPMENTS**

**RV PEOPLE**

**INDUSTRY NEWS**
*Olga Markowitz*

**PROFITMAKERS**

**ADVERTISERS' INDEX**

**CLASSIFIED ADS**

**CALENDAR**

**BACK PAGE**
*Sheryl Davis*


ON THE COVER: The high costs of litigation are throttling everyone in the stream of commerce. But now, proposed federal legislation to help untangle the product liability dilemma (page 32) and an innovative arbitration program (page 34) may help slice the escalating costs of doing business through the courts. Cover photo: Darryl Gray.

# Perspective

An analysis of RVB's monthly survey of its Dealer Advisory Board Members

GAYLORD MAXWELL

| | NEW | | | | | | USED | | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | FOR MONTH | | | YEAR-TO-DATE | | | FOR MONTH | | | YEAR-TO-DATE | | |
| | JULY '85 | JULY '84 | % CHANGE | 1985 | 1984 | % CHANGE | JULY '85 | JULY '84 | % CHANGE | 1985 | 1984 | % CHANGE |
| MOTORHOMES | 123 | 121 | + 1% | 856 | 857 | 0 | 104 | 95 | + 9% | 647 | 699 | −18% |
| TRAVEL TRAILERS | 93 | 113 | −18% | 682 | 754 | −10% | 102 | 108 | − 6% | 590 | 666 | −11% |
| TRUCK CAMPERS | 28 | 17 | +65% | 143 | 143 | 0 | 13 | 27 | −52% | 98 | 149 | −34% |
| CAMPING TRAILERS | 270 | 190 | +42% | 1221 | 1285 | − 5% | 58 | 38 | +53% | 278 | 219 | +27% |
| FIFTH-WHEELS | 39 | 29 | +34% | 214 | 264 | −19% | 12 | 8 | +50% | 68 | 69 | − 1% |

| | FOR MONTH | | | YEAR-TO-DATE | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | JULY '85 | JULY '84 | % CHANGE | 1985 | 1984 | % CHANGE |
| SALES VOLUME | $10,403,867 | $9,186,918 | +13% | $66,652,921 | $67,240,988 | −1% |
| TOTAL UNIT SALES | 841 | 746 | +13% | 4,797 | 5,105 | −6% |
| NEW UNIT SALES | 552 | 470 | +17% | 3,114 | 3,303 | −6% |
| USED UNIT SALES | 289 | 276 | + 5% | 1,681 | 1,802 | −7% |

Something happened to 70 percent of the Dealer Advisory Board (DAB) members on the way to a bad year. They had a good July! It was definitely the best month so far this year for the DAB as a group, and clear proof that even if it has been a slow year so far, it doesn't have to continue that way for every dealer.

Four of the five categories of new RV types were up. Only travel trailers stayed in the minus column. Three categories of used units were up.

The picture for the year-to-date improved with the addition of July's sales, but it is generally still down. New motorhome and truck camper sales are about the same for the two years; all other categories are down. Year-to-date sales are down less than 1 percent.

There is a not-so-good side to the picture, however. Profits are definitely down. There have been sales at the expense of profits as dealers worked to lower their inventories. Many poor ratings were given in July along with many more fairs. The bottom didn't fall out, but it sagged.

Whether or not an upward trend has set in remains to be seen. There is nothing in particular about the economy that would suggest such, but the RV buying public isn't always predictable.

## MOTORHOMES

It has been quite a struggle, but new motorhome sales have finally caught up with last year's tally. Most dealers are about equal with last year. Several of the larger dealerships on the DAB skidded a bit, but some of the multi-type dealers did exceptionally well. There is no particular pattern as to who is up and who is down. New-motorhome profits were down. No one rated them excellent; the range was from poor to good.

Although they are still moving reasonably well and bringing reasonably good profits, the supply of used motorhomes bears careful watching. Some dealers are already finding that their inventory is larger than they would like.

## TRAVEL TRAILERS

New-unit sales are quite sluggish. Not even the DAB's large trailer specialists are getting significant numbers. Most sell 8 to 10 units per month—during the good months. Only one member of the board has sold more than 100 units so far this year, and that was with two lots. Profits were rated from fair to good for July.

Used units are faring as badly as new. Year-to-date, sales in that category are down even more than new sales.

Undoubtedly, part of the problem with travel trailer sales is that the price of a new unit added to the price of a new tow rig equals the price of a motorhome. In many cases, the motorhome wins.

## TRUCK CAMPERS

Something very good happened to truck camper sales in July. The 65 percent increase in new-unit sales is most impressive. Equally impressive is the fact that twice as many dealers sold that RV type in July of this year than last. Two dealers reported good sales of lightweight and/or folding-top campers.

## CAMPING TRAILERS

The tremendous increase in new-unit sales was due primarily to very successful sales by two dealers. One, a folding trailer specialist, moved more than a hundred units. The other, a dealer who sells all five RV types, sold 42. The former was celebrating the opening of a new store during which he offered his trailers at big discounts. The latter "just worked harder." Profits tended to be on the low side for everyone.

## FIFTH-WHEELS

The 34 percent increase for the month is contrary to the drop in new-unit sales for the year-to-date. Both DAB fiver specialists had a good month, and several other dealers did better than usual. Profits were rated from poor to good. Δ

*Perspective is a compilation of data provided by RVB's Dealer Advisory Board (DAB), a group comprised of 23 dealers representing a cross-section of the U.S. Dealer body. This report is an attempt to reflect the current retail sales picture; it does not purport to indicate RV production or factory sales to dealers.*

# Associations

OLGA MARKOWITZ

The **Texas Recreational Vehicle Association** (TRVA) has issued a legislative bulletin outlining the major changes in the Texas Dealer License Law, effective September 1, 1985. Dealers can expect to see these changes, among others, when they receive their dealer license renewal applications. It will be necessary for a dealer to specify what type of vehicles he/she will carry: 1) motor vehicles—Class A motorhomes; micro-minis, low profile; minis or Class C's; and vans; 2) travel trailers—fifth wheels, folding campers, truck campers and toppers. If a dealer proposes to carry more than one type of vehicle, separate fees—at $100 for each type of dealership—will be charged. Renewal applications will also require a sworn statement to include the following information: that a permanent furnished office is maintained, that a minimum of five vehicles are on display, that the applicant intends to remain in business for at least one year at the specified location, and that the dealership situated on real property owned or leased be under a written lease for a term of not less than one year. An outline of the additional new rules is available from TRVA, 3355 Bee Caves Road, Suite 104, Austin, Texas 78746.

Now available from the **Recreation Vehicle Industry Association** (RVIA) is the *1985 Membership Directory & Industry Buyers' Guide*. The 100-page directory lists the names and addresses of RVIA's 543 member companies. Complimentary copies have been sent to all RVIA member companies, and are available to nonmembers for $30 each plus $1 for postage and handling. Requests can be sent to RVIA's Publications Department, P.O. Box 2999, Reston, Virginia 22090. A new publication is available from RVIA. "1986 Recreation Vehicle Sales . . . A Year-End Report" reviews shipments from manufacturers to dealers. Shipments are detailed by state and region, product category, market share, unit size and retail value. A special section focuses on RV consumer demographics and marketplace growth since 1980. Copies are available for $5 plus 75 cents postage and handling, from RVIA, Department REV, P.O. Box 2999, Reston, Virginia 22090.

A colorful new brochure is available from **Go Camping America Committee** for free distribution to potential new campers. One section highlights various types of RVs now available for purchase or rent. Contact Gary LaBella at (703) 620-6003 for details.

The following charts regarding the RV industry in Indiana were released from the **Recreation Vehicle Indiana Council** (RVIC), a division of the Indiana Manufactured Housing Association Incorporated:

**FACTS CONCERNING THE RECREATIONAL VEHICLE INDUSTRY IN INDIANA**

| | |
|---|---|
| Number of recreational vehicle manufacturing plants | 120 |
| Number of van conversion plants | 200 |
| Number of campgrounds and RV resorts | 400 |
| Number of RV retailers | 200 |
| Number of people employed in the RV industry | 50,000 |

* *According to the April 1985 Labor Force Summary, Indiana Employment Security Division, there are 16,400 people directly employed in RV manufacturing. There are 400 RV resorts and campgrounds × an average of 3 employees = 1200. The Indiana Employment Security Division estimates that in any industry, two jobs are created in service and supply areas for each manufacturing job; therefore, there are another 32,800 jobs directly dependent on the RV industry.*

| | |
|---|---|
| Recreational vehicles produced in USA in 1984 | 398,2009 |
| Retail value of RV production in USA in 1984 | $7,000,000,000 |
| Recreational vehicles produced in Indiana in 1984 | 157,500 |
| Retail value of RV production in Indiana in 1984 | $2,500,000,000 |
| Number of RVs sold by Indiana retailers in 1984 | 15,500 |
| Retail value of RVs sold by Indiana RV retailers | $270,000,000 |

* *According to Richard Curtin, Ph.D., University of Michigan, it is estimated that 10 percent of all Indiana households own some type of recreational vehicle.*

# RVIA, JULY

The marketing committee of the Recreation Vehicle Industry Association has announced that the total number of recreational vehicles shipped from manufacturers' plants during July 1985 was 29,900 units, down 4.8% from July 1984.

The shipment figures released by the association are contained in a report compiled for the membership by RVIA's marketing committee under the chairmanship of Allen Yoder Jr. of Jayco Incorporated, Middlebury, Indiana.

| RV shipments were as follows in July 1985 | | July 1984 | Percent Change | Cumulative 1985 | Cumulative 1984 | Percent Change |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| TRAVEL TRAILERS | 4,600 | 5,800 | - 20.7% | 37,600 | 46,700 | - 19.5% |
| PARK MODELS | 500 | 400 | + 25.0% | 4,400 | 4,300 | + 2.3% |
| FIFTH-WHEELS | 1,600 | 1,600 | 0% | 12,700 | 12,600 | + 0.8% |
| TRUCK CAMPERS | 500 | 700 | - 28.6% | 4,600 | 5,500 | - 16.4% |
| MULTI-USE VEHICLES | 15,100 | 14,600 | + 3.4% | 103,600 | 107,600 | - 3.7% |
| TYPE A: MOTOR-HOMES | 2,300 | 2,800 | - 17.9% | 21,300 | 25,500 | - 16.5% |
| TYPE B: VAN CAMPERS | 900 | 500 | + 80.0% | 4,800 | 4,900 | - 2.0% |
| TYPE C: MINI MOTOR-HOMES | 1,900 | 2,300 | - 17.4% | 18,900 | 22,700 | - 16.7% |
| FOLDING CAMPING TRAILERS | 2,500 | 2,700 | - 7.4% | 23,100 | 25,800 | - 10.5% |
| TOTALS | 29,900 | 31,400 | - 4.8% | 231,000 | 255,600 | - 9.6% |

# WDA QUARTERLY SALES FIGURES

*RV Business* publishes a quarterly report of sales statistics from the Warehouse Distributors Association (WDA). The chart shown here is based upon a representative sampling of WDA members, as compiled in the second quarter of 1985. While these statistics are not intended to be fully indicative of the sales volume among distributors in the RV and MH industries, they are presented here as an insight into the supplier/distributor industry.

**SALES VOLUME**

| | SECOND-QUARTER SALES VOLUME | |
|---|---|---|
| | PERCENT CHANGE 1984 to 1985 | RANGE OF CHANGE |
| REGION 1 | +17.9% | +25.1% to - 6.9% |
| REGION 2 | +4.9% | +25.9% to - 8.2% |
| REGION 3 | - 3.4% | +49.0% to -22.8% |
| REGION 4 | +16.9% | +34.8% to -20.7% |
| REGION 5 | + 5.8% | +31.6% to -25.4% |
| REGION 6 | + 1.0% | +34.7% to -13.8% |

**Region 1:** Connecticut, Delaware, Maine, Maryland, Massachusetts, New Hampshire, New Jersey, New York, Pennsylvania, Rhode Island, Vermont, Virginia, West Virginia and Washington, D.C.; **Region 2:** Alabama, Florida, Georgia, Mississippi, North and South Carolina, and Tennessee; **Region 3:** Illinois, Indiana, Iowa, Kentucky, Michigan, Minnesota, Missouri, Nebraska, North and South Dakota, Ohio and Wisconsin; **Region 4:** Arkansas, Colorado, Kansas, Louisiana, Oklahoma, New Mexico and Texas; **Region 5:** Alaska, Arizona, California, Hawaii, Idaho, Montana, Nevada, Oregon, Utah, Washington and Wyoming; **Region 6:** Canada.